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THE
UNITED IRISHMEN
THEIR
LIVES AND TIMES

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SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
SAMUEL NEILSON
AN IRISH PATRIOT OF 1798
ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE
UNITED IRISHMEN
WHO SACRIFICED HIS FORTUNE AND HIS LIFE
IN THE CAUSE OF HIS COUNTRY
BORN IN COUNTY DOWN, IRELAND, SEPT. 1761.
DIED IN POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK
AUGUST 29. 1803.
ERECTED BY THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS.
DIVISION No. 2. POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK.
AUGUST 28. 1905.
NEILSON

The Grave-Stone of Samuel Neilson

From a Photograph of the Original in the Rural Cemetery, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

THE UNITED IRISHMEN

THEIR LIVES AND TIMES

BY

RICHARD ROBERT MADDEN

M.D., F.R.C.S., M.R.I.A.

NEWLY EDITED

WITH NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INDEX

BY

VINCENT FLEMING O'REILLY

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"With the exception of the introduction of the gas fixtures and the clock over the dock in which Robert Emmet stood throughout the trial, no change has been made in the appearance of the room since that time."—History of the Emmet Family by Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet.

THE RISING OF THE MOON

John Keegan Casey

A splendid example of national patriotism through the medium of song is exhibited in this ballad built around the signal for a people's uprising against unjust rule. John Keegan Casey was one of the poets produced by a national movement that followed in the paths of 1798. The Fenian cycle of poetry produced several excellent singers but none finer than Casey. He was born in 1846 or 1847 and for his activities on behalf of his countrymen in 1867 he was made a political prisoner, suffered cruel punishment in jail, and as a result died prematurely in 1867 — 23 years of age.

A. D. 1798

"Oh, then tell me, Shawn O'Ferrall,
  Tell me why you hurry so?"
"Hush! *ma bouchal*, hush, and listen;"
  And his cheeks were all a-glow:
"I bear ordhers from the Captain —
  Get you ready quick and soon;
For the pikes must be together
  At the risin' of the moon."

"Oh, then, tell me, Shawn O'Ferrall,
  Where the gath'rin is to be?"
"In the ould spot by the river,
  Right well known to you and me;

One word more — for signal token
  Whistle up the marchin' tune
With your pike upon your shoulder
  By the risin' of the moon."

Out from many a mud-wall cabin
  Eyes were watching thro' the night;
Many a manly breast was throbbing
  For the blessed warning light.
Murmurs passed along the valleys,
  Like the banshee's lonely croon,
And a thousand blades were flashing
  At the risin' of the moon.

There beside the singing river,
  That dark mass of men were seen —
Far above the shining weapons
  Hung their own beloved "Green."
"Death to ev'ry foe and traitor!
  Forward! strike the marchin' tune
And hurrah, my boys, for freedom!
  'Tis the risin' of the moon."

Well they fought for poor Old Ireland,
  And full bitter was their fate;
(Oh! what glorious pride and sorrow
  Fill the name of 'Ninety-Eight!).
Yet, thank God, e'en still are beating
  Hearts in manhood's burning noon
Who would follow in their footsteps
  At the risin' of the moon!

THE
UNITED IRISHMEN

MEMOIR OF SAMUEL NEILSON

CHAPTER V

LETTERS OF NEILSON

THE preceding details bring down the history of Neilson to the date of his removal from Dublin, and his arrival, with the other state prisoners, at Fort George in Scotland. I now lay before my readers the letters of Neilson written to his family during the term of his imprisonment, hitherto unpublished, and some others of an earlier date addressed to Tone, which have appeared in the memoirs of the latter. These letters place the character of Neilson in a very different light to that in which it has been not unfrequently viewed by writers who have treated of the history of the struggle he was engaged in.

I have thought it better to insert the following extracts from his letters in the successive order of their dates than to introduce them apart, and thus take from their interest by any intervening matter. The seven letters addressed to Tone

were written in the years 1792 and 1793; the others between 1798 and 1803.

TO THEOBOLD WOLFE TONE.

Belfast, 21st November, 1792.

Dear Tone—It gives us much pleasure to find that you are going on so well. You really manage things wonderfully, considering that you are Papists, and of course wicked and ignorant scoundrels.

As to the spirit and determination of our friends in Dublin, we expected much, and we are not disappointed. In general, throughout Ireland you have spoken well too; but I have to remark to you from myself that, if we are to judge by their newspapers, the people of Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford, are by no means friendly to the doctrine of the people's sovereignty. I do not blame them for not joining us in hallooing up the French, for there are many things in their conduct that, under all circumstances of the case, cannot be very acceptable to an Irish Catholic. But I blame them, severely blame them, for attacking the principle, and I fear they are far behind you, and by no means ripe yet. It is, however, to be understood that I speak under correction on a point I do not so well know as you do.

You can form no conception of the rapid progress of union here; and I do assure you, we are farther forward than even I expected we should have been in a twelvemonth. The universal question throughout the country is, when do we begin? Do we refuse hearth-money or tithes, first?

As to a petition in your favour, it will go from Belfast—a literal copy of that which Mr. Latouche kicked

out; and I believe by January we are perfectly safe in calling a meeting of the county Antrim. I am taking some steps to prepare for it. I should imagine the petition from Antrim will be approving your conduct, and praying redress generally. I will write to you about the county Down in a few days. Luke Teeling, one of the county members to your committee, dines here to-morrow with us, in order to receive instructions—ay, to receive instructions, for he says he will represent the county faithfully.

S. N.

TO THEOBALD WOLFE TONE.

Belfast, 3rd December, 1792.

Dear Fellow-slave—I do command you to give me, nightly, an abstract of the proceedings of the Convention. I can assure you it is essentially necessary to all our interests, and insist on it. Why did you not answer mine of Thursday? Tell Russell his documents are necessarily delayed till to-morrow. We are extremely anxious to hear every iota of your proceedings, as we only wait for the result of them to frame our plan of action.

S. N.

TO THEOBALD WOLFE TONE.

[Belfast.]

Slave—You have not done as I should have expected. You have, for five days of the most interesting crisis, kept us, your constituents, in the dark. We will never forgive you. We all waited, and searched, and laboured to hear news from our friends these two nights—and not a word. The enemies have had abundance. Charges the most heinous are echoed against the Catho-

lics, and we have no means of refuting them—thanks to our faithful representative.

S. N.

TO THEOBALD WOLFE TONE.

[Belfast.] 28th February, 1793.

My dear Friend—I was at Dungannon, and do not dislike the resolutions so much as you seem to do. I wish I saw anything like them, or even half like them, from the other provinces. As to the third resolution, take it with the commentary, and I fancy on reflection you will not disapprove of it. But what signifies resolutions? They will never recover to the people their long lost rights. Or what is more—what signify the united exertions of four or five spirited counties, who aim at rational liberty, without money, without arms, without ammunition? . . . I say what signifies such exertions against such opponents when not supported by the people? In such a situation they become of the nature of sedition, and when against the implied sense of the nation should terminate. It is true, a few honest men by going forward may sacrifice themselves as victims; but is the state of the people bettered by all this? I cannot see how; and I will add that when a nation does not express a wish to be free, it ought not to be made so contrary to its will. We have now in this town one regiment, in Lisburn five companies and two troops of horse, accompanied in the whole by eight brass field-pieces, two howitzers, with their proportion of men. These are strong arguments against the people, and in our present state irresistible. If, however, the rest of the nation was ready, this county would not be deficient in spirit. We complain that you give us no

account of the proceedings in Dublin, no opinion on the plans of government, no information how the Catholics relish Hobart's bill, no intelligence of their views respecting reform—in short, that you leave us completely in the dark at a time when a storm is obviously collecting round our devoted heads. Remember, I am a plain, honest man, and like to talk my mind without reserve to those I can confide in. Two persons of indifferent character have been summoned before the Star Chamber from this town. Pray, what does this court tend to, or to what points are their views directed? Why do you not inform us on all these points when you call for news from this sterile corner, where we make all our proceedings public to the world? I wrote to Keogh last night a similar letter, and stated to him that he would probably look upon it as peevish. I dare say you will do the same. Be it so; peevishness itself is gratified by expression, and I feel myself the better for having given it utterance.

S. N.

P.S.—You are in a mistake about the French war. It was uncommonly reprobated by a strong resolution.

TO THEOBALD WOLFE TONE.

[Belfast.] 11th March, 1793.

Dear Sir—I dare say you will have heard much of disturbances here. I think it my duty from friendship and fellow-citizenship to state the facts to you. On Saturday four troops of the 17th Dragoons came here from two neighbouring towns. At six o'clock in the evening about thirty of them burst out from their lodgings, and with drawn sabres, accompanied by about six or eight artillerymen, proceeded to demolish several

signs of Dumourier, Mirabeau, Franklin, Washington, &c. From this they proceeded to the houses of several individuals, M'Cabe, &c., and broke windows, shutters, &c., cutting and abusing every person they met with in the street, in a most unmerciful manner. This military mob reigned for about an hour. The empire of the laws began then to be restored. The officers and magistrates were at length found. The volunteers began to assemble, and the depredators soon took to their heels. Some were secured, but afterwards liberated by their officers. The volunteers mounted guard all night. Yesterday the town met, appointed a committee to inquire and report, and the volunteers re-assembled in the evening, filled the houses that were suspected to be attacked, and formed two reserves—in all about 450 to 500. This turned the scale, the military took the alarm, bowed, and begged pardon; and this day the whole regiment of horse were ordered to leave town in fifteen minutes' warning by General White, whose conduct has been highly proper. Tranquillity is perfectly restored; we have forgiven the troop, and permitted the offenders to depart with their corps; and we remain standing to our arms, without having offended or given cause of offence to a single military man.

SAMUEL NEILSON.

TO RICHARD M'CORMICK, ESQ.

26th August, 1793.

Dear Sir—Will you excuse an unfortunate, persecuted northern incendiary the liberty of asking once more his reputed countryman and friend one simple question? Is Ireland abandoned—I mean by those who have the necessary abilities and confidence to lead the

great majority of the Catholics? If so, let us all join in the act. We once united, or appeared to unite, in an effort to rescue our common country. She has not been rescued. Where lies the cause? Who are in fault? Each party is apt to exculpate itself, but I suppose the fault must be laid to our door, especially if the old adage, that what every person says must be true, is to be relied upon. Every man who has a part in governing this country blames us; every man who fattens on church and state blames us; almost every Protestant out of Ulster blames us; every man of landed property throughout all Ireland blames us; and, strange to tell, those men who stimulated us to action—those men who pledged themselves to risk all in the common cause—those men who alone have benefited by our exertions—in one word, the Catholics of Ireland—if we are to suppose that their representatives know anything of their sentiments—are decided in condemning us; for, not to speak of their refusal to include us among their friends, when they were concluding their business as a convention they could not, when assembled the other day in a festive capacity, omit insulting this province. Yes! I will repeat it—the meeting at Daly's insulted the province of Ulster; because, when ransacking records of junquettings of pseudo patriotism for toasts, they tacitly condemned one-fourth of their countrymen—the body who saved them when deserted or opposed by all those whom they toasted on the 20th instant. Your prudence in overlooking Mr. Tandy, who has been destroyed in your cause—your wisdom in disregarding the sufferings of Messrs. Butler, Bond, and Reynolds, who were imprisoned for you—and your temperance in

neglecting this town, which has been abandoned for four months past to martial law on your account, cannot but be highly gratifying to every true Irishman. But your omitting to mention the Dungannon Convention—which represented one million and a quarter of your countrymen, and which demanded the restoration of your rights in particular, as well as the rights of Ireland in general —was such an act of baseness as will not in future be believed, and which, I confess, I never can forget. I speak to you, my dear friend, the language of a warm, but of an honest Irishman, and I know you too well to think you will censure me for it. I may be mistaken, but you know I am not easily operated on—trifles do not usually affect me. I thought it my duty to communicate with one who I believe to have similar feelings with myself on such occasions, and I shall be much gratified by a reply as soon as convenient.

S. N.

LETTERS OF NEILSON TO HIS FAMILY.

TO MRS. N.

Newgate, 14th July, 1798.

Among all my other calamities it has not been the least, that I was likely to leave this scene of everlasting sorrow and renewed affliction without knowing my dear wife, children, and friends did so much as exist. I need not, therefore, tell you what pleasure I felt on receipt of yours, with your accustomed fortitude. I trust it will not fail you in case of the worst, for which we should, on such occasions, be always prepared. I have had a smart illness these few days past, which vexed me the more as it was likely to affect my head, which at this crisis would be dreadful indeed. I am, however, nearly

quite well again. My irons have been taken off, and I get walking in the lobby much earlier and later than formerly, but alone. My appetite is still very poor, and my pillow nearly sleepless.

I cannot form the slightest conjecture who is to swear against me, nor is the day of my trial fixed; it may be to-morrow. The Messrs. Sheares were tried yesterday, and their trial continued from nine in the morning until half-past seven this morning, when they were found guilty. I understand my name was not implicated in any part of this immensely long trial of twenty-two hours.

The evidence (for me) from Belfast is intended chiefly as a proof of the wickedness of my persecutors and the extent of my sufferings. I have had but a few minutes' conversation with my agent since the return of his son, for whose safety he has been extremely anxious these two days past. Mr. Horner has got an order to see me, and he paid his first visit to-day. I think this condescension in Mr. Cooke the more extraordinary, as I had been treated with such unexampled severity. You will, perhaps, be astonished when I tell you, that it was for several days the orders to the sentinel to shoot any of my fellow-prisoners who would ask me (across a yard eighty feet wide) how I was, and I locked up in a cage; nay, out of 170 prisoners who have access to a yard from which my cell could be seen, not more than two or three would venture to look through the bars into my grating of a morning, to see whether I was alive or dead.

Mr. Curran has been with me two or three times, and expresses warm friendship. Mr. Crawford, my agent,

is very indefatigable—indeed more so than I wish. He has heard that my celebrated friend Bird, alias Smith, is once more to be my accuser; but this is too ridiculous and wicked even for the present times.

Mr. Bond and Mr. M'Cann, it is said, are to be tried next; but their ways are so crooked that one does not know what to believe.

Poor Mrs. Moore has suffered severely; the house has been made a barrack, and the soldiers live at free quarters. Mrs. Bond's friendship the same as ever.

The Messrs. Sheares got their sentence to-day, at four o'clock: they are now here in irons, and will, I believe, suffer to-morrow, but in what part of the town is yet unknown.

My mother and uncle will look after the farm, and your father after the town parks; to these three I advise you to entrust everything out of doors; the children will be sufficient for your care. And oh! let me entreat you once more to rear them hardily, to do everything in the house in turn. To William, reading, writing, English well—no other language, nor dancing; to the girls, the same, with knitting and sewing, but no tambour nonsense. Let their dress be plain and homely, befitting their state; and of all things, labour to form their minds by curbing pride and inciting to virtue and industry, not by scolding and whipping, or cajoling, but by emulation, which is by far the safest and surest incentive to exertion. S. N.

TO MRS. N.

18th March, 1799.

We have got notice from Mr. Cooke that we are to get ready to go on board ship to-morrow morning at

six o'clock; what they will do I know not, but we have all written complaining of the short notice.

S. N.

M. Dowling, W. Dowdall, A. O'Connor, T. Russell, and S. Neilson, are those who have received notice.

TO MRS. N.

Port Glasgow, 30th March, 1799.

After a sea of troubles, since I wrote you last from Dublin, I am arrived here this day; we were fourteen days at sea, two of which we were in Belfast harbour riding out a storm.

We believe we are to go to some part of Scotland, far north, but do not yet know what place. My health is still very poorly, but that cannot be helped. There are twenty of us in all here, among whom are the O'Connors, &c.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Aberdeen, 4th April, 1799.

After a most fatiguing journey through snows and mountains, we are arrived here to-day, being within ninety-two miles of our journey's end (that is Fort George). Our treatment has been as well as our situation and that of the country through which we had to pass would allow, and we have reason to expect that the same liberality will be extended to us in the fort.

My health is much better.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

21st July, 1799.

All the other prisoners (except R. O'Connor) are in very tolerable health. Indeed, our treatment is as lib-

eral as can be expected, when confined with the idea of inviolably close confinement. And it is very easy for one who, like me, has been these three years under the dominion of rascally turnkeys in common jails, to feel the difference between their treatment and that kind of military restraint and of honourable treatment which is consistent and comprehensible. We know there is no possibility of holding any kind of intercourse with mankind, save what passes through the inspection of those who sent us here; but then we are relieved from the degrading situation of dependence on ruffians; our lives as well as our feelings are in the hands of those who are led to respect both, from the habits to which they have been accustomed from their infancy.

I see a union is determined on between Great Britain and Ireland. I am glad of it. In a commercial point of view, it cannot be injurious; and I can see no injury the country will sustain from it politically. So decidedly am I of this opinion, that I would purchase or rent land in Ireland at this moment in preference to any country on earth, had I it in my power. Many persons, however, of great knowledge differ from me on this subject, but time will show who is right. You will say this is a point with which you have no concern. Very true. But as I know it will make a bustle with you, I wish you to be in possession of my opinion, in order that any person may have it who thinks it worth the asking for. If I had possessed the means, I would have published my sentiments on this subject in a short, nervous pamphlet; so deeply am I impressed with its national utility. In spite of fate, in spite of persecution, and in spite even of ingratitude itself, I find Ire-

land will be uppermost in my thoughts, go where I will.[1]

Our time passes here much more lightly since we have been permitted to get in books and newspapers. We get "The Star" and "Sun" daily from London; and are supplied with books at a town called Inverness, about ten miles distant. Mr. Tennent and one or two others are the principal purchasers; but we all get the reading of their books in turn, and as we are closely locked up for about eighteen hours in the twenty-four, we have no want of time to read, as well as to contemplate.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

25th August, 1799.

I often wonder that I never hear, from you or any one else, a single account of the situation of the country. I want to know merely the public transactions which pass before your eyes, and I wish also to know who are living and who dead among my old acquaintances; who remain in the country, and who have left it; what remnant of peace you have, and who are the distributors of justice. These, and a thousand such pieces

[1] The opinion expressed in the above paragraph, if really entertained by the writer, would imply either an extraordinary degree of inconsistency, or of sagacity, that looked to the very distant and possible results of that measure for the accomplishment of his objects. The sincerity of the opinion, however, is very problematical. It is difficult to reconcile his new-born zeal for a union with England with his previous efforts to effect a separation, especially when we find the same principles on which he started in 1791 avowed in one of his letters in 1802. Perhaps the solution of the mystery will be found in the garrison regulation, which submitted the correspondence of the state prisoners to the inspection of the governor and the secretary of state.—R. R. M.

of information, are less or more interesting to me as they relate to a community where my all—that is, my wife and children—are placed. It is distressing to be always under obligations to others for that intelligence which I might as well have myself directly, without any violation, either in letter or spirit, of that restriction which government has thought proper to impose upon our correspondence with Ireland. I can easily perceive that it is a misunderstanding on this point that has so completely cramped all your letters.

Their object is merely to prevent any political communications between us and Ireland, and God knows I am far from wishing to carry on any such; but it by no means implies a restriction of that familiar and frank intercourse which should subsist in every state, and under every circumstance, between a wife and a husband, when free of any political object.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 5th November, 1799.

We have this day received notice that our letters from Ireland must in future come through the secretary's office, in the same manner that ours have hitherto gone. You will, therefore, hereafter direct to me as usual, but enclose your letter, unsealed, in a cover directed to "His Majesty's Secretary for the Civil Department, Dublin." The letters will be forwarded by him to the Duke of Portland's office in London, and thence they will be conveyed to us. It is impossible to divine what has given rise to this measure, for I am confident that no improper correspondence (I mean no political) has been attempted by any prisoner in this Fort.

TO LIEUTENANT-GENERAL STUART, GOVERNOR OF FORT GEORGE.

Fort George, 8th January, 1800.

Sir—I am one of a number of state prisoners who applied to you a few days since, for the purpose of obtaining such an arrangement respecting the subsistence allowed by government as might tend farther to cover our actual expenses in this Fort. You were pleased to approve the motives which led to the application, and kind enough to suggest a plan which might accomplish the principal object we had in view, without curtailing the supply of our table. For myself (and I am confident every other gentleman has the same opinion) I felt this proposal of yours as an additional proof of your desire to make our situation as little irksome as the circumstances of the case will permit; but I would entreat your attention to a view of the subject which perhaps had escaped you.

I am a man, sir, far advanced in the fourth year of my confinement. At its commencement I was in affluence. My entire property since that time has been destroyed: I will not say how. Suffice it to say that my family has been overwhelmed with misfortune. On the one hand, I cannot bear to add to their misery, whilst I am able to avoid it by submitting to privation myself. On the other, I do not wish to have my name bandied about the public offices as a petitioning pauper whilst I am able by any means to confine my expenditure within the allowance. Such are the facts, and such my feelings. I forbear to press them by unnecessary arguments upon one of your sensibility; I am sure it would be unnecessary. I will therefore only add that I have

determined to forego supper, in order to make such a saving as may provide for the expense of my washing, and such other essential necessaries, provided this can be accomplished without giving you or others any inconvenience. I wait your sanction. With additional trouble, sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

SAMUEL NEILSON.

You will please to observe that, by merely abstaining from supper, no change, such as catering, is occasioned, as I mean to order nothing for myself.

TO HIS CHILDREN.

Fort George, 23rd March, 1800.

My dear Children—Wherever you go, and whatever you do, remember that you are in the presence of God, who overlooks all your conduct, and before whose judgment you will one day come. He rewards the virtuous and punishes the guilty. I know you will exert yourselves to obtain his reward, and in so doing every honest person will love you. Then I will delight in being your affectionate father.

SAMUEL NEILSON.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 30th March, 1800.

I see by the papers that some of the state prisoners in Ireland have been liberated lately. I am very happy to see it, and I hope the poor northerns—who have been so long, and, in my opinion, so unnecessarily detained in the Dublin prisons—will also be liberated. As to us deportés, I see no disposition to recollect us; we are put, like old debts, in the back of the book, and may lie so

until chance or some incident shall bring a curious eye to overhaul the musty pages which enclose us; although God knows how the selection was hit upon—for many in this place were never calculated to set the Liffey on fire.

We expect Mrs. Emmet here in the course of the summer.

Mrs. O'Connor and her children remain with Mr. O'Connor, and they have all the liberty of ranging the Fort and neighbourhood; the other nineteen of us are closely confined as usual.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 18th May, 1800.

I have a piece of news to give you which will be very acceptable. We have got liberty to bathe in the sea at the foot of the ramparts three times a-week, and I have already bathed twice, and will every day I can. We owe this indulgence to the kindness of the governor, and the ready acquiescence of the British government, and it affords to my mind a convincing proof that (however they may act contrary to my opinion of right) security, not punishment, is their object in our tedious captivity.

Mrs. O'Connor and her family are still here, but Mrs. Emmet has hitherto failed in all her applications; there appears to be a marked difference—so it was in days of yore. I remember Mrs. Haslett a successful advocate when Mrs. Redfern failed. For myself, I must say that (with some exceptions arising from local influence) I have not personally to complain of the conduct of the government to me; yet still I feel that one lady should not be permitted and another refused. For us, alas! my dear Nancy, there is no hope of that kind of meet-

ing; but we have the sure and certain hope of a meeting beyond the grave, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the virtuous have eternal rest." In this world even I doubt not of our happy reunion, and the occasion may arrive before either of us are aware. Let us then rest assured that the all-wise Disposer of heaven will bring about these happy events in his own good time; and in the interim let us profit by our misfortunes so as to frame our minds to virtue.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 15th June, 1800.

I am sure you will rejoice with me on hearing that poor Mrs. Emmet is, after all, permitted to see her husband. She will be here, I suppose, by the time this reaches you, and will, I understand, bring two or three of her children with her.

As to the notion of you and I ever meeting in this place, it is totally out of the question for a thousand reasons; but I confess to you I have some idea that one of the children might reside here with me. I will not dilate upon the advantages of education on the one hand, or of beloved company on the other. I will equally avoid the obstacles that may prevent even the possibility I refer to. I will therefore only just throw out the thought that should leave be granted, should an opportunity of conveyance offer, and should you approve, I would wish to have one of the children (which you should think fit) with me, and I know the expense of maintenance would be less than at home. I have started this idea, but I will not indulge in it until I hear from you; and I hope you will consult our friends,

thinking with you that years may pass over me in this dreary mansion, and these the most precious to the forming the minds of our children. I add no more.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 16th November, 1800.

Mr. Emmet has got liberty to walk with Mrs. Emmet and the children anywhere within the walls, accompanied by one attendant. In order to understand the indulgence, you must know that our space for exercise consists of two small divisions, enclosed and separated by double rows of tall paling. Mr. R. O'Connor has had this indulgence, together with liberty to take the air out of the Fort, ever since his illness last year.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 28th December, 1800.

For a wonder, I can tell you a piece of news from this fortress. Mr. Roger O'Connor and his family left us on Christmas-day; they are gone to London for the purpose of obtaining medical advice. I suppose in the meantime he will be in prison there, or at least under some kind of restraint, but probably his entire liberation is at no great distance. We were a little crowded together before this change, for want of a sufficiency of rooms; but now Mrs. Emmet has got their apartments and everything has resumed its former state. There is nothing she and her family more anxiously desire than that William should come here in the spring; they promise themselves that his habits and manners are such as to make him a most desirable playfellow, and on my part I never saw children I would so soon have

him with. I need not tell you, therefore, that I wish you to lay out everything for his coming here as soon as the severities of the season are over, should an opportunity offer. When Mr. Patten [1] was here, he signified an intention of returning in the spring with another of Mr. Emmet's children—this would be a good opportunity for William to come here.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 6th February, 1801.

Mr. Roger O'Connor has been liberated in London. He has given £9,000 bail to reside in such place in England as government shall point out. This may open the way to further liberations.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 3rd May, 1801.

I am both glad and sorry to tell you a piece of news respecting Mrs. Emmet: she was delivered, on Thursday evening last, of a still-born child, but she is in a very fair way of recovery. Her illness occasioned great uneasiness amongst us. The idea of a delicate woman, thus situated, confined in a close prison, seven hundred miles from her friends, and without a single female acquaintance to attend on her, was very shocking to a feeling mind. Your old friend, Mr. Chambers, has got liberty to ride or walk about the neighbourhood, accompanied by an attendant, on account of his delicate state of health. The other prisoners are all pretty well; for my own part, I am as well as you can possibly expect. We bathe every morning at eight o'clock, and

[1] Mr. John Patten, the brother of Mrs. Emmet, the late librarian of the Royal Dublin Society.

we get liberty now to walk in the evening upon the ramparts; we never got it, until now, after four o'clock.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 17th May, 1801.

I had been for some time suspecting the coolness you speak of, but I am, as well as you, totally at a loss to guess the reason. If it took its rise in a certain quarter, it must be wholly owing to some misrepresentations of the gentleman who occasioned you so much pain the last time you saw me, and who had, for a time, entire dominion over him; that, however, as well as many other delusions, is completely done away with. He has been gradually opening his eyes for eighteen months past, and his mind appears now to be settled. Our intimacy has rather increased in proportion as the other has subsided—though, in all human probability, it will never be what it once was; for though I can never have the same opinion of the man that I had before, possibly he may feel the same way respecting me. Be that as it may, however, I should be very sorry to change minds with him. These are considerations on which it is painful to dwell; and sure I am, that where a life of good intentions and integrity has a few imperfections, it is but for our own and others' happiness to forget them as much as possible: none of us are perfect; and let us ever bear in mind the passage in the Lord's Prayer—'Forgive,' &c.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 7th June, 1801.

The Misses Emmet send their best respects to you, and Mrs. Emmet requests me to represent to you how

very sensible she is of your friendship, manifested in your anxiety about her illness, and your happiness on her recovery. She desires to be most affectionately remembered to you. I always take a kind of melancholy pleasure in spending an hour with her and the children; their sweet prattle and her maternal superintendence greatly interest me. And then, alas! I recollect how far I am from my own.

I have nothing new to tell you. I hear nothing of A. O'Connor's liberation. I fancy his hopes begin to decline. Your friends here are all well. R. S., who has been in very low spirits for some time past, is greatly pleased at learning the perfect recovery of his daughter. John Sweetman is getting much better; he is able to go out to the ramparts, but not yet without a stick. As for myself, I continue to enjoy most excellent health. I have been taught, in the hard school of adversity, in all my trials to maintain an equanimity of spirit. I should profit ill by what I have felt and suffered if I were not pretty well prepared for any event that may befall me.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 14th June, 1801.

We are all in tolerable good health. Mr. Emmet has got permission to walk out with his wife and children, accompanied by an attendant. This indulgence, inasmuch as it tends to re-establish Mrs. Emmet's health, has given me much pleasure, as indeed it has done to most of us. Our bathing continues as usual; and, for my own part, I have not enjoyed so good health since my mind was made uneasy about "The Star" prosecutions in 1793: from that period, as you may well

recollect, I could never reckon on my liberty or my life, and was of course in a state of perpetual anxiety, which was much increased by the uneasiness of my partners. What I have been made to feel since that time has cured me perfectly of all idle apprehensions.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

28th June, 1801.

I am very happy to tell you that since my last we have been indulged with the liberty of playing ball from eleven till three every day. Yesterday was the first day, and I availed myself of it with great avidity. I am sure you will be glad to hear that I was able to play the whole four hours, and with much more strength and activity than I ever experienced since I began to play ball—that is, since I was a prisoner, or rather ten months after my imprisonment. The place destined for us to take this exercise in is the bottom of the ditch of the Fort, between two ramparts; but we have great abundance of room, and a very good wall. This is another consequence of the governor's humanity—for to him we owe it.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 12th July, 1801.

The unsettled state in which the office of secretary of state has been for the last five months prevented me from making my application for liberty for William to come here; but I really do not know whether his grace of Portland or Lord Pelham is the actual secretary. Besides, the governor of this fort, when I stated the subject to him, at the time of Mr. Fletcher going to Ireland, appeared to set his face against it; and I am

very loath to take any step that had not his entire sanction, because his general conduct towards us has at all times been marked with a strong character of humanity. I am the more vexed at these obstructions because Mr. Cuthbert has at length succeeded in obtaining liberty for his wife and niece to come and reside with him.

Mr. Tennent has heard several times of late from his brother, who is still in London, and who, I hope, may finally succeed in operating his liberation.[1]

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

[In reference to the severe illness of his son William, who had recently arrived at Fort George.]

Fort George, 26th July, 1801.

As to the possible event, I am happy to find that your mind is made up and prepared for the worst. This is the true frame of mind which reason and religion equally point out. The loss of a much loved child is no doubt one of the most afflicting trials that can befall a human being; but when we consider the mass of wickedness and of sorrow from which he is snatched away, and when we look forward to the well-founded hopes of a glorious eternity, we should bow to the stroke, and say with reverence, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

S. N.

[1] When Robert Tennent applied for the liberation of his brother he at the same time pressed for permission for the son of Neilson to be admitted into Fort George, and to remain there with his father—and succeeded in both objects.—R. R. M.

TO MRS. N. FROM HER SON.

Fort George, 24th August, 1801.

My dear Mother—I like this place very well. My father is very well, as are the rest of the prisoners.

I had the pleasure of seeing a little dog and a hare. Mr. Wilson has the hare, and Mr. Cormick has the dog. We had a very pleasant voyage, only Monday, which was a little stormy. Mrs. Cuthbert and Miss Park took great care of me. Mrs. Emmet will be as kind to me as if I was her own child. My father had a pretty little bed and arm-chair ready for me.

FROM WILLIAM NEILSON TO HIS MOTHER.

Fort George, 30th August, 1801.

My dear Mother—I am sorry to tell you that Mrs. Cuthbert has been very ill ever since the day I came here. My arm is almost stout, and Doctor Macneven says it will be as well as ever. I bathe a little every morning; at first I was afraid to dive, but now I am growing bolder. I am counting with Mr. Dowling in the morning, reading and grammar with Doctor Dickson, in the middle of the day, and writing and reading with my father, who is also beginning to teach me geography, in the afternoon. I play in the evenings with Robert Emmet and his sisters: sometimes I sup at their mother's, and sometimes in our own room, on bread and milk. I go to bed at nine, and rise before eight o'clock. Father sits an hour later than me. My love to my sisters.

Your dutiful son,

WILLIAM NEILSON.[1]

[1] Neilson's boy was then eight years old, and by all accounts was a youth of extraordinary talents, and of the most engaging qualities.—R. R. M.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 14th September, 1801.

Your boy continues as well in every respect as you could possibly wish. He evinces every day new powers of mind, which excite in me the most lively presages of his capacity, when it shall be matured by instruction and experience. He is always under the eye of Dr. Dickson, Mr. Dowling, myself, or Mrs. Emmet. His instruction is so mingled with agreeable conversation, that he always prefers it to play, and my company to that of any other person, young or old. As to wine, you may be at your ease; he will never taste anything here, liquid, but milk and water while he has his health. You seem to me (by your recent letters) to have wound up your heart in this boy, to an extent that borders on being sinful—sinful as respects the influence that might be exerted on your own health and happiness, especially should any dispensation of Providence tear him from you. I really do not know how you would be able to meet such a stroke, and yet it is one for which we ought always to be prepared, being, as it is, in the ordinary course of human events. It is not very easy to describe the pleasure I feel in the boy, who far exceeds my most sanguine expectations, and I suppose I possess as much rational affection for him as ever a father did for a son, and yet I hold it my duty to be prepared to resign him to his Maker, whenever he shall be demanded, without repining.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 11th October, 1801.

Since my last a most extraordinary event has taken place, of which you will, of course, be informed before your receiving this—I mean peace between England and the French Republic! Thus has at length terminated a war which has occasioned so much human misery, and against which, as you may well recollect, I earnestly and constantly raised my feeble voice. Now that it has terminated, I hope the necessary steps will be taken to heal the wounds it has given rise to. Along with matters of more extensive and general concern, I trust it will be the means of our so long-wished-for reunion. Upon this subject, we have as yet received no notice or intimation of any kind, though we are in daily expectation of it.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 4th November, 1801.

I see you, as well as all our friends in Ireland, are filled with the hopes of an immediate liberation: indeed most of ourselves entertain the same expectations; but as I never was in the habit of leading you astray by false hopes, so I will not begin now. And I must therefore tell you plainly that I do not indulge the fond hopes of meeting you soon in our own country. In the first place, I think the peace is nothing on the part of England but a manœuvre to keep off the evil day. I don't think she has made peace with any sincere desire to keep it, nor do I think her finances are in such a state as to enable her to stand the dispersion of her commerce by the competition of other nations. I there-

fore think it more than probable, that as soon as the long nights are past and an immediate terror of invasion over, she will begin to look out for pretexts of renewing the war, and these will not be long wanting. Now this being the case as I take it, and the minister acting on the idea that the Irish wish to shake off their yoke when the opportunity occurs, will not be hasty in sending away those who might be the most ready to concur in any similar operation. Such is the train of reasoning that leads me to expect no such liberation. I think, however, that as all pretext for keeping us is now taken away, they will be apt to adopt some new measure respecting us, but what it will be I really cannot comprehend; most probably we will be permitted to go somewhere beyond seas, but when, how, or where I am at a loss to guess. I know, for my own part, I will embrace almost any honourable offer to get out of their hands, well knowing a prison is no place to accomplish either public or private purposes. You will easily see that I could not wish to put government in possession of my apprehensions on this subject, and of course I am constrained to blink the point as much as I can in my regular correspondence. In case my fears are founded, and that we must go abroad, I do not apprehend any very great hurry, and of course there will be time to dispose of William as circumstances may direct. Mrs. Emmet is still ready and willing to fulfil her promise respecting him, but even her destination is by no means certain. His expense I cover in this way: we are allowed somewhat more than four glasses (about two-thirds of a pint) of wine every day at dinner, this I save, and sell privately to some of the

prisoners at 3*s.* 6*d.* per bottle, which pays for his diet, having agreed for it at the cheap rate of £15 per annum. The first quarter will be due on the 23rd of this month. I will by that time have as much due to me as will pay for it. I don't feel the slightest inconvenience from this privation; and though it looks a little awkward to sit at table while others are taking their glass, yet my fellow-prisoners cannot but esteem me the more for the motive; indeed I feel a good deal pinched about the usual expenses of mending, washing, paper, quills, &c. &c., not having at present a crown in the world. But then I do not owe a farthing to any person, and I have learned to make a little go very far. If my liberation were once accomplished, I am not at all afraid of being soon out of these difficulties, provided my health continues. Whenever I turn my eyes to this subject my feelings are all for you, not for myself.

I enclose you three letters, which after reading you will seal and forward by the bearer, Mrs. Risk, who is a lady I was slightly acquainted with in 1798. Her husband fell a victim to his patriotic principles at that trying period.[1] It is impossible for me to express, in terms sufficiently abhorrent, the feelings respecting the French usurpation and usurper, to whom I impute nearly all the calamities of my country for the last four years. Nor do I know what to say of such of

[1] Mrs. Risk of Sandymount, the lady above referred to, was the person to whose house Lord Edward Fitzgerald was to have been removed the night of the day on which he was arrested. This lady's name is found constantly associated with transactions of the United Irishmen which required the services of an emissary in whose intelligence and fidelity entire confidence could be placed.—R. R. M.

my unfortunate countrymen as thought they saw the deliverance of their country connected with a man who had trampled all justice and all liberty under foot in his own; their eyes are at length opened—I wish they had been cured at less expense. With such politicians for my friends, and with my enemies the Orangemen in power, Ireland would have no attractions for me beyond the circle of my own family. A certain gentleman has ceased to have mischief in his power here. Hudson, Chambers, Tennent, and Dowling alone, are on speaking terms with him.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 22nd November, 1801.

I remember in one of your late letters you expressed an opinion about gratitude, in which you said you differed from a favourite author of mine. The fact is, truth and justice are the great paramount duties, and everything that goes to violate either is criminal. It is an old saying that "we should be just before we are generous." As to those, for instance, who have protected my wife and children when thrown destitute on the wide world, I owe them a debt which justice commands me to pay whenever I shall have it in my power; and I hope yet to be able to prove to them that their conduct has left a deep and everlasting impression on my mind—an impression of all-commanding justice, not of that servile gratitude which I have so often seen used as an excuse for base and unworthy acts.

I know you will be delighted to hear that William is daily gaining ground in every respect. He is, besides, in excellent health and spirits. He has made such a

proficiency with Mr. Cormick on the flute, that he played second at a little concert in Mr. Emmet's room last night, when the party consisted of his musical master (who is, you know, a young lad), John Sweetman, and their own family, with the addition of Dr. Macneven, who is very fond of children; his music, you know, is stolen from his play hours.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 13th December, 1801.

A king's messenger arrived here two days ago for the purpose of taking Messrs. Tennent, Simms, Dowdall, Dickson, and Hunter to Dublin, where they are to be liberated on bail. We are as yet totally ignorant as to the intentions of government respecting the others. As to myself, I am perfectly prepared for any event, being fully convinced that a superintending Providence orders all things for the best, however contrary, apparently, to our notions of their advantage or disadvantage to us for the time.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 30th December, 1801.

The long-expected letter has this moment arrived from the captain of the ship of war, stating his arrival at Greenock, and his being ready to receive the state prisoners. They (that is, the five) will of course set off, as I suppose, to-morrow morning for Greenock, from whence they will be conveyed to Dublin. As to the remainder of us, nothing new has turned up; but from all I see and hear I think we will be permitted to go abroad very soon.

John Sweetman intends to accompany the travellers as far as Greenock, from whence he will proceed by Belfast to Dublin; so that you may expect to see him in a few days after you receive this. He will inform you verbally of our situation and expectations. The prisoners are all well, and Mrs. Emmet continues pretty stout. She desires her best respects to you.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

1st January, 1802.

This will be handed to you by our dear friend, John Sweetman, who I hope will spend a day with you. I have nothing new to say to you; my views and expectations are precisely the same as when I wrote to you by Mrs. Risk. I therefore implore you not to indulge in any hope of seeing me in Ireland at present, nor allow yourself to be carried away by any foolish rumours of the day. You seem to forget that my political conduct is out of the range of forgiveness, and I am by no means sorry that it is so. Notwithstanding the darkness of our prospect at present, I look to the liberation of my country with as much confidence as I ever did.

S. N.

TO HIS DAUGHTER A. N., FROM S. N.

Fort George, 10th January, 1802.

We have had no farther accounts respecting ourselves, but we expect that some measure of liberation will take place when the definitive treaty of peace shall be signed; and that event may be looked for very shortly, if we are to credit the newspapers. After a separation of sixty-four months from my home and family a

return to it would no doubt afford me exquisite pleasure; but if that happiness should be denied me, and should your mother, sisters, and yourself be still doomed to suffer for the alleged offences of your father, we must endure it not only with patience, but with fortitude.

S. N.

TO MRS. N., FROM S. N.

Fort George, 2nd February, 1802.

I was extremely happy to learn that the prisoners in Carrickfergus have been liberated. If you see Mr. Teeling or Mr. Falloon remember me to them. Give my best regards also to my late fellow-prisoners. I trust R. S. (Robert Simms) has brought his brother and you together before this reaches you. This is a business I have had much at heart. At any rate I earnestly entreat you to cultivate an intimacy with R. S. He has an honest heart, and a sincere regard for every creature belonging to our family. Indeed, I cannot say less of W. S. (William Simms).

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, Sunday Morning.

I have nothing now to tell you respecting ourselves, only that as Mrs. Emmet's lying-in draws so nigh that she would not be able to travel in case of a removal, Mr. E. made an application for leave to stay with her until her recovery, should such removal take place in the course of next month; and he has yesterday received an answer, "that he would be permitted to stay should such an event take place"; which you see is in fact saying nothing as to our destiny.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 2nd May, 1802.

There was a letter to-day from Sir R. Ford to a prisoner here, stating that he would be very soon disposed of. In that case, I will expect to see you shortly. William is well, and doing well. Mrs. Emmet is perfectly recovered; the child well.[1]

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 9th May, 1802.

As to our liberation, everything remains in the same state of agonizing uncertainty. Definitive ratifications, exchanges, proclamations, have all been consummated —the public force disbanded, in a great measure; but Fort George, and its solitary inhabitants, placed as we are on this outskirt of the world, seem to be once more forgotten. I should, however, have made an ill use of my five years and three-quarters' imprisonment if I were not able to endure even this tantalizing suspense.

I trust, my dear, that you and our sweet little ones will be able to persevere in that tranquillity of mind which has already borne you through so many trying situations; and that you will ever bear in mind that our re-union must take place in God's own good time, and that it cannot take place till that time.

Mrs. Emmet is perfectly recovered; her little one is thriving extremely well; they took the air in a carriage on Thursday last, and she walks out a little almost every day. Mr. Russell and several of your friends here desire to be affectionately remembered to you.

S. N.

[1] A girl, named Jane Erin Emmet.

TO MRS. N.

Monday Morning, 31st May, 1802.

At length we know our destiny! A pardon is now making out, and we are to be sent immediately to Hamburgh. We have received this intelligence (which we know to be authentic) by this morning's post. This destination has not a little nonplussed us, for I believe there is not one among us that means to reside in that country. Liberty, however, at any rate, is sweet. As to myself, you know my immediate object is America, but I certainly will find myself no little hampered as to outfit there, and means of conveyance; but my principal embarrassment is about William. He can't bear the idea of parting with me, and has been in tears this hour past because I won't promise to take him with me. I am indeed a good deal divided in my own opinion on the subject. I see much to say on both sides of the question, and therefore I leave it entirely to you to decide. I could fill this sheet with reasons pro and con, exclusive of my own as well as his feelings; but under all the circumstances, I feel that I owe it to you to leave this matter to you to decide, and by that decision I will abide. We have it in contemplation to make an application, in order to get the destination of the ship changed, and if possible to touch at Ireland, in order to see our families, and afterwards proceed to Bourdeaux and America, some of us wishing to go to France, and others to America; whether we may succeed or not I cannot say.

TO MRS. N.

Fort George, 13th June, 1802.

My dear—I received on Thursday last your very affectionate and sensible letter of the 6th. You will see I had anticipated all your wishes respecting William, who I hope is now safe and happy with you. I was well pleased to find that you bow to this new and unexpected dispensation with your accustomed fortitude. I know that fortitude well, and I reckoned much upon it; but I confess I was more or less apprehensive that it might have been somewhat broken down by the perpetual din of the dreamers who surround you.

I am, then, to inform you that the vessel which is to carry us to the Elbe has arrived yesterday evening, and is now at anchor under our guns. She is called the "Ariadne," a twenty-gun frigate. Her captain (Campbell), who is a native of this place, bears a most excellent character. He has evinced himself to be a man of undaunted courage, and from that alone one may conclude that he is a man of humanity; so that we have a prospect of a pleasant voyage. Mrs. Emmet and all her children, as I suspected, go with us, and we only wait the arrival of a messenger, who is hourly expected, in order to take our departure for Germany.

I wrote to R. Simms on the 2nd, and was rather disappointed at not hearing from him yesterday or to-day. I will, however, expect a letter from him, or some other of my friends, on my arrival at Hamburgh, which will be necessary for my intended passage to America. Of one thing you and my friends may rest satisfied, that whatever credit I may get will be used sparingly; the most rigid economy being what I conceive a moral duty

to every one, in my situation especially; nay, if I could work my passage to the new world I would prefer it to the thoughts of being burthensome to any one.

In the meantime, I have reason to be thankful that my health is very good, and that my faculties are by no means injured by my long confinement; and whatever I may have lost in ardour, I have, I trust, acquired in maturity of judgment. To my imprisonment I owe the full conviction that all human wisdom is folly and vanity, and that there is no happiness but in virtue—no rest, but in the grave.

The opinions which I hold, and the principles for which I have suffered, are at present out of vogue and unfashionable; and many, I know, will despair of their success. If they are wrong, they should not succeed; and if they are right, they must and will succeed; for it is God who rules the world. Remember me in the most affectionate manner to my mother and sisters, to your father and mother, and in general to all my friends and relations. Give my love to my children. May the Almighty bless and preserve you all, is the hourly prayer of

Your ever affectionate

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

On board the "Ariadne," off Cuxhaven, 4th July, 1802.

Though we are not yet landed our passage is considered as at an end, and we will in all probability breakfast in Cuxhaven to-morrow morning. We sailed from Fort George at half-past one on Wednesday the 30th ult., and have had a quick, but rough passage. We were transmitted to the frigate by the governor with

the utmost politeness, and we have been received and treated on board her with every marked civility. Nor is it easy to say whether officers or men were most desirous to render our situation on board comfortable—the former from politeness, the latter from feeling. I am in hopes of remaining at Cuxhaven until a vessel (to be engaged by my friends, who go up to Hamburgh) shall call for me; and in this intention I am much actuated by a hatred of show and expense.

Nine o'clock.—We have just cast anchor opposite Cuxhaven, at the distance of about one mile. From what I now learn I think it probable that I will go along with the rest up to Hamburgh (distant fifty miles) in the morning. Wind and flood tide appear as if they would favour us.

TO MRS. N.

Cuxhaven, 5th August, 1802.

After staying in Hamburgh and Altona for nearly a month, waiting a passage for America direct in vain, I have been obliged to take one by a circuitous route,[1] and embarked accordingly at the latter place on Friday last, and have ever since been tossed in the Elbe by contrary winds, so as to take five days and a half to accomplish that which we did in less than seven hours going up. So much for the uncertainty of the seas! And, to add to all, I was dreadfully sea-sick the whole time. There were several vessels for the northern and New England states here, on board one of which Mr. Cuthbert and family, together with Mr. Cumming, took their passage, and are to pay about £75 for the whole.

[1] From this ambiguous expression Mrs. Neilson inferred his intention to revisit Ireland.—R. R. M.

I left the before-mentioned family (the Cuthberts) in Hamburgh, together with J. Sweetman, Matthew Dowling, and S. E. Hudson; Dr. Macneven had departed for Dresden; A. O'Connor and J. Chambers had gone by land for Holland; Emmet's family, together with Russell, Sweeny, Cormick, and Wilson, had sailed two days before me for Holland. So you see we have all taken our respective destinations, and are completely scattered.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Off Heligoland, 6th August, 1802.

I avail myself of the pilot's going ashore to tell you that we got under weigh from Cuxhaven this morning at five o'clock with a fair wind. We are now distant from Hamburgh 110 miles, and I trust by this time to-morrow we shall be twice that distance, and more. I dreamt last night that my dear William was ill.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

[No date; written in Dublin after his return from Belfast, some time in October, 1802, having had the temerity to return to Ireland in the face of the heaviest penalty of the law that could be incurred, by the violation of an express act of parliament that prohibited the return to the British dominions of any of the banished persons named in that act.]

I made my way up by day and night, through rain and all, and even at the expense of setting up one of our horses, in order to arrive in time—when, behold, I have been detained here (I need not tell you in what

state of uneasiness) until this day. Every second day the ship was to sail, and when the second day came, still the sailing was as uncertain as ever. During this vexatious delay it occasioned no little grief to me that I had been induced to leave home so hastily and prematurely. It was not a small consolation to me, however, that during this painful sojourn I was hospitably protected, and had almost every opportunity I wished to vindicate my character from the foul aspersions which had been cast upon it behind my back. Ann can tell you but a small part of the kindness that was testified to me when with her; and many, I may say all, of our old friends here who had been abused (by false reports) would give you a very different reception now than they would have done these four years past, should you think it right to visit this place.

I dare not name to you the different proofs of continued or renewed friendship I have experienced in this place; those who had slackened renewed their confidence in me, for it was my constant avowal that I would (even under all risks to myself) meet any man who had any, even the slightest charge to bring against me, and if none such lived in Ireland at present, those who were abroad did not run a less risk than I did in venturing into the country, and with respect to any of them who might pretend to have anything to say against me, I only wished a suspension of opinion until we could meet face to face. Upon the whole, except on the score of my private feelings, I do not regret my delay, now that it has terminated.

I was for some days after my return very poorly—the perpetual night riding and anxiety of mind had

injured my health; but I assure you I am now going on board as well as I have been for a long time. I regret extremely that I cannot name to you the variety of persons to whom I owe even more than our usual national hospitality. They risked, you know, everything in harbouring me.

S. N.

TO MRS. NEILSON.

New York, 8th December, 1802.

Since my arrival I have not had an entire day of health. I have met here much kindness, and though mostly confined I have my little pamphlet published. It is meeting a rapid sale, and will be reprinted, as I understand, in Philadelphia. I send you some papers and my pamphlet, and would write you at length if I was able. I hope I shall do so in a few days. I wait with anxiety for the arrival of the "Edward" at Philadelphia. My affectionate love to the children, my mother, your father, and all friends. Ever and unalterably yours,

S. N.

TO MRS. NEILSON.

New York, 1st January, 1803.

I am happy to tell you that I am recovering daily. I am not, however, strong enough nor well enough informed yet to write to my friends in such a satisfactory manner as I could wish. I am still hesitating about Charlestown, and I am all anxiety for letters from Ireland. In the meantime I expend, I may say, no money, while I am daily acquiring useful information. Since I wrote you last I have had a very pressing in-

vitation to commence a newspaper here, and very warm promises of support. I have declined giving an answer, both on account of my delicate health and my incapacity still of judging of the true state of parties and of the country.

S. N.

TO MRS. N.

Pecksgill, 70 miles up Hudson's River, 4th Feb., 1803.

I am spending a few days here with Mr. Owens, who was so kind as to invite me warmly; and my physicians, one and all, thought it very advisable for me to accept the invitation on account of my health. I have been more and more pressed to commence a newspaper, and I have had very flattering encouragement indeed. If I recover perfectly I will undertake it at all risks, for there appears to me a vacancy for such an undertaking; nor do I mean to lose much more time—so that if a favourable opportunity offers I would much wish for William in the first instance—we can be immediately useful to each other; and as soon as I set all a-going I will, either personally or otherwise, take means to bring you and the children over; but I don't wish to do so until I get everything ready for your comfortable accommodation.

S. N.

New York, 5th May, 1803.

I have been to Philadelphia to consult several friends, particularly William Kean, about the best means to start with success. Upon the whole, after consulting Dr. White by letter, and J. Caldwell [1] personally (who

[1] The two Caldwells, of whom mention is made in Tone's diaries, emigrated to America. William was living in New York in 1811.

is now married to a Miss Higginbottom), as well as all my other friends within reach, I have determined to commence an evening paper here. I hope you have sent William out with Mr. M'Niece; his utility will be of the utmost importance, both to me and himself, as well as to you. It would appear that the Almighty in general only changes our afflictions, for, although I now write without pain, I am obliged to hold my eyes within three or four inches of the paper on account of the dimness of my sight.

TO HIS SON.

New York, 19th May, 1803.

My dear William—I write you on chance, because I have hopes that you are now on your passage to this place. I have been perfectly delighted by yours of the 21st of March, especially when you state your particular attention to your mother and sisters: they are every way deserving of duty and affection, and my ardent desire is that you should not fail in either. Should this letter reach you before your departure for this place, give my affectionate regards to all your sisters, to your cousins and all other friends, especially your grandfather and grandmother, by no means forgetting your aunts. I wrote two letters to your mother this morning, both in some haste, as I expected the vessel to sail very quickly; the wind has however prevented her as yet. Make my apology to the children for not writing to them, and I am sure they will excuse me when they know

John was living in Orange county, at Salisbury-mills, New York State, the 29th of October, 1844, when I received a letter from him.—R. R. M.

that this scrawl has cost me nearly an hour, and that in torture, owing to a terrible rheumatism.

Your affectionate father,

SAMUEL NEILSON.

(This was the last letter written to his family by Neilson.)

CHAPTER VI

VIOLATION OF THE COMPACT

THE preceding letters and narratives give ample details of the imprisonment of the leaders of the United Irishmen, of their ultimate liberation, and arrival in Holland. There is one circumstance connected with their confinement in the spring of 1798, which is not referred to in those papers, but which deserves attention, as an illustration of that fell spirit of Orangeism, by which not only the rabble of that society, but the members of the aristocracy who belonged to it, were animated.

On the 24th of March, 1798, the day after the breaking out of the insurrection, the most virulent proposition that ever was addressed to a legislative body, even to the Irish parliament (with one exception [1]), was made by the late

[1] The exception above referred to is that which has been previously noticed—the proposal of M'Naghten in the Irish House of Commons in August, 1798, to have the three principal state prisoners, T. A. Emmet, O'Connor, and Macneven, brought from their several prisons before drum-head court-martial, summarily tried and executed, for publishing an advertisement in "The Hibernian Journal" complaining of certain Orange newspapers misrepresenting their evidence before the secret committees of the Lords and Commons, on which occasion the fierce denunciation

Lord Farnham (celebrated for his pious zeal in the "dodge" of a later day, called "the second reformation"), then Colonel Maxwell. It would be well for the people of England to make themselves acquainted with the characters and dispositions of those sanctimonious gentlemen, who take on themselves the protection and support of the interests of true religion in the sister country. On the occasion above mentioned, in the Irish House of Commons, the gallant colonel and future saint said:

The principal fomenters and leaders of the rebellion were in prison, and as the project of vesting confidentially an absolute authority in the executive was for the purpose of crushing rebellion as speedily as possible, and insuring the security of the state, he would submit to the wisdom of the house, whether it would not be right and necessary that military executions should have retrospect to those persons that were then confined, and that they should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible, in order that the rebels who looked up to them as leaders might no longer derive any encouragement from the expectation of rescuing them at a future day from their captivity.

Lord Castlereagh said:

He most earnestly besought gentlemen that they would not suffer the zeal and warmth of their feelings on this occasion to run away with their good sense; that

of those state prisoners on the part of Mr. Plunket contributed to support that truculent proposition, which involved the life of an early friend and fellow-student, T. A. Emmet, in jeopardy.

they would not proceed to that which would be unconstitutional indeed; but above all, he conjured them not to press a measure upon his excellency which must brand his administration with the imputation of cruelty, and sink it to the same degraded and sanguinary level with that government which sought to destroy the happiest constitution. For heaven's sake, let not gentlemen press a general and indiscriminating system of unnecessary vengeance, nor call upon his excellency to violate the great duty of the executive, that of administering justice in mercy.[1]

The compact between the United Irish leaders and the government was entered into about the middle of the month of July, 1798. The terms on which government agreed to spare the life of Bond, to relinquish prosecutions, and to permit the persons who had signed that agreement to expatriate themselves to a country at peace with his majesty, had been completely and satisfactorily fulfilled by the prisoners in the early part of the month following. The memoir of Emmet, O'Connor, and Macneven was no sooner delivered in (on the 4th of August), giving a detailed account of the origin, objects, and progress of the conspiracy, and their examination gone through before the privy council, than Lord Cornwallis authenticated the fulfilment of the compact on their part by two acts of his in relation to their disclosures. He sent Mr. Dobbs,

[1] Report of Debates in Irish Commons, March, 1798.

accompanied by certain popular leaders of the United Irishmen, prevailed on to undertake this mission by the state prisoners, with passes and safe conduct into the county Wicklow, where the insurgents were still in arms, to make known the compact and recommend submission. In the other instance, we find by "The Belfast Newsletter" of 31st of August, 1798, that General Nugent, then commanding the northern district, had been apprised of the compact and ordered to act on it, and he accordingly published a notice to the people of Ulster, in the paper referred to, calling on the people to submit and avail themselves of the benefit of the terms set forth in the lord lieutenant's proclamation, and announcing to them "the compact entered into with the state prisoners O'Connor, Emmet, Neilson, Jackson, and seventy others." Before the Amnesty Act had become the law of the land, or the compact with the state prisoners had been entered into, Lord Cornwallis, about three weeks after his arrival in Ireland, had issued a proclamation authorizing the generals commanding in the different districts to grant protection to persons returning to their duty, surrendering arms, and taking the oath of allegiance. It was dated the 29th of June, 1798, but was not published in "The Gazette" till the 3rd of July. Special care, however, was taken to neutralize the beneficial ef-

fects that might have been expected from the fair construction that might have been put on the terms of this proclamation, by transmitting along with this public document, a circular letter addressed to the generals of the respective district (without publicity) which could not fail to frustrate the avowed intentions of the former.

CIRCULAR.

Dublin Castle, 2nd of July, 1798.

Sir—I enclose to you the form of a proclamation, which according to your discretion you will have filled up and sent among the rebel bodies assembled in your district. This proclamation you will see invites the deluded to desert their leaders, and, of course, excludes those leaders from pardon.

You will take care to have the lists descriptive of tne persons to whom you grant certificates transmitted from time to time to me, with such observations as shall occur.

I am to desire you will send me the names of those persons who are the reputed leaders of the rebel bodies, and who, of course, are excepted from the offer of pardon, as it may be advisable to specifically proclaim them, and possibly to offer rewards for their being apprehended.

N.B.—You will cause the townland and barony in which the persons reside, to whom you grant certificates, to be inserted in your certificate.

In the Irish House of Commons, Tuesday, July 17th.

The Right Hon. Lord Castlereagh presented to the

House the following message from his excellency the lord lieutenant, which he read in his place as follows:

"Cornwallis.—I have received the King's commands to acquaint the House of Commons that his Majesty, notwithstanding his just abhorrence of the unnatural and unprovoked rebellion which has broken out in this kingdom, yet being ever disposed to exert, as far as possible, his royal prerogative of mercy, and to receive again under his royal protection those who, by the arts of wicked and designing men, have been seduced from their allegiance, has signified his gracious intention of granting his general and free pardon for all offences committed on or before a certain day, upon such conditions and with such exceptions as may be compatible with the public safety; for carrying which benevolent purpose into execution, his Majesty has signified his gracious intention of sanctioning in the usual form, by his royal signature, a bill for that purpose, previous to its being submitted for the concurrence of parliament."—Lords' Journals, vol. viii. p. 116.

The amnesty announced on the 17th July was nominally in operation from that date; but the bill brought into parliament to the same effect did not pass through all its stages till the 6th of October. In substance, it accorded his majesty's pardon for all acts of treason and sedition committed up to the 22nd of August, 1798, upon condition of banishment, or such terms as his majesty might think fit to impose: excepting from the benefit of it all persons guilty of the

Henry Joy McCracken

A Northern Leader of the United Irishmen. After an Engraving by J. H. Lynch from a Miniature in the Possession of the Family

crime of murder; all persons who had been in custody between the 1st of January, 1795, and the passing of the said act, under any charge of treason or suspicion of treason; all persons who had held commissions or been engaged in his majesty's service, and had joined in the rebellion; all persons concerned in or consenting to any design for procuring the invasion of the realm; all members of treasonable committees called National, Executive, Provincial, or County Committees of United Irishmen; all persons who had acted as generals, adjutant-generals, colonels, lieutenant-colonels, majors, or captains in the rebel forces; all persons in anywise concerned in the rebellion, who should not deliver up their arms in such manner as appointed by the chief-governor; all persons attainted of high treason during the present session of parliament; all persons convicted by court-martial since the 24th of May, 1798, of rebellious practices; and also thirty-two persons named therein, fugitives from justice, charged with treason.[1] The ten classes of persons excepted from the operation of the Amnesty Act comprise, in point of fact, the great mass of the people who had been involved in the guilt of the rebellion. The whole of the leaders are clearly debarred from its benefit. But every man, whether leader or follower, who

[1] Irish Statutes at Large, vol. xviii., p. 1054.

had taken the oath of fidelity to the union—the avowed object of which was revolution, the means of accomplishing it foreign assistance—had obviously and evidently consented to "procuring the invasion of the realm," and was consequently not legally entitled to pardon. But though it were not intended the law should be enforced against the latter, and the remedial statute with regard to that class was meant to be liberally construed, another class was excepted which completely frustrated the avowed intention of the act with regard to a very large portion of the society—namely, the shopkeepers, the small farmers, tradesmen, and persons in the middle ranks. The grand object of the founders of the society was by its organization to establish a universal representation; to assign to every member a certain rank in a committee, and to render him eligible to any office in any grade of the system for which his activity and devotion to it might qualify him. Now, two of the treasonable committees, excepted from the benefit of this act, included in their numbers the very class whose numbers comprised so large a portion of the strength of the union—namely, the middle ranks above referred to. The baronial committees are not excepted, it is true, but it is only necessary to read the informations of Maguan, Hughes, and Newell, to perceive that persons in

the middle ranks took leading parts in the county committees, and that military titles, such as those of captain, &c., were conferred even on persons among the working classes.

Whether United Irishmen were members of a baronial or of a county committee, it then mattered little to their security, so long as the proof of belonging to either depended on the testimony of the reckless miscreants who were the arbiters of life and death in those days.

In the guilt of belonging to either there was no difference which justified the distinction made between the two committees. If mercy was the guiding motive which dictated the terms of this amnesty, it would have been doubly blessed both to the giver and the object of it, had the spirit and the letter of the law been in accordance with its professed intention. If its object was to put the people once more in the king's peace—to quiet their apprehensions—and to secure them from the exercise of that rigour of the local terrorists which went beyond the law—the first aim of any remedial enactment to effect this purpose would have been to remove every facility which their enemies might have to keep alive the popular disquiet, and the general feeling of insecurity from the malignant enmity of Orangeism. The delusive amnesty, however, set out with proclaiming pardon, and terminated with an

array of exceptions, which virtually amounted to a nullification of the act of grace solemnly set forth in the preamble.

There were many things done in the rebellion by both parties that violated the laws of humanity as well as justice; but it seems to me that of all the treasons committed by either party (for there was treason in this fearful struggle against the people—we are told by Mr. Grattan—even of a worse kind than that against the government), the treachery displayed all throughout the proceedings of the Irish administration, connected with and consequent upon the compact they had entered into with the leaders of the rebellion, was the most signally flagitious.

The same policy which was intended to defeat the proposed object of this amnesty, by multiplying exceptions to its operation, which deprived the people of all security, and afforded their enemies such numerous facilities of applying those exceptions to their cases, was invariably pursued throughout the rebellion, and had been acted on previously to its outbreak.

In a proclamation of Lord Camden, dated 17th of May, 1797, wherein the employment of military force for the suppression of all tumultuous and traitorous assemblies is enjoined, all persons engaged therein, and in treasonable societies, are called on to surrender before a specified day, and "his majesty's gracious pardon" is promised to

all such persons, with the following exceptions:

Save and except all such as have been guilty of murder; conspiracy to murder; burglary; burning of houses, corn, or hay, stacks of straw or turf; maliciously digging up or injuring or destroying any potatoes, flax or hemp, rape or corn, of any kind, planted or sowed; or destroying meadows or hay; maiming or houghing of cattle; administering or causing to be administered any unlawful oath or engagement to any of his majesty's forces, of any description; or inciting or encouraging to commit any of the aforesaid offences respectively; and save and except all persons now in custody.[1]

The last paragraph left the people as much at the mercy of the despots of their several districts, and the rural staff of spies and informers of each, as they had been before. During the progress of the rebellion there was no deviation from the same policy. Before the surrender of Wexford, Captain Keughe, on the part of the people in possession of the town, sent the following proposal to General Lake:

That Captain M'Manus shall proceed from Wexford towards Oulart, accompanied by Mr. E. Hay, appointed by the inhabitants of all religious persuasions to inform the officer commanding the king's troops, that they are ready to deliver up the town of Wexford without opposition, lay down their arms, and to return to their alle-

[1] Appendix to Report of Lords' Committee of Secrecy, 1797, No. 10.

giance, provided that their persons and properties are guaranteed by the commanding officer, and that they will use every influence in their power to induce the people of the country at large to submit, &c.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LAKE'S ANSWER TO MR. KEUGHE'S PROPOSAL.

Lieutenant-General Lake cannot attend to any terms offered by rebels in arms against their sovereign; while they continue so he must use the force entrusted to him, with the utmost energy, for their destruction.

To the deluded multitude he promises pardon, on their delivering into his hands their leaders, surrendering their arms, and returning with sincerity to their allegiance.

(Signed)

G. LAKE.

Enniscorthy, 22nd June, 1798.

On the defeat and surrender of the French at Ballinamuck, a vast number of the deluded people who attached themselves to the former were put to death—many in the field; and some who were taken prisoners were tried and executed on the spot; whilst those who fled, wherever met with by the military, were put to the sword.

The lord lieutenant on the 11th of September published a proclamation, but whether the want of knowledge of the grace offered, or the inability to comply with the terms of delivering up a French firelock, was the cause, it produced but little effect:

BY THE LORD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF IRELAND.

A Proclamation.

CORNWALLIS.

Whereas, it appears that during the late invasion many of the inhabitants of the county of Mayo, and counties adjacent, did join the French forces, and did receive from them arms and ammunition; and whereas it may be expedient to admit such persons to mercy who may have been instigated thereto by designing men, we do hereby promise his majesty's pardon to any person who has joined the enemy, provided he surrenders himself to any of his majesty's justices of the peace, or to any of his majesty's officers, and delivers up a French firelock and bayonet, and all the ammunition in his possession; and provided he has not served in any higher capacity than that of private.

This proclamation to be in force for thirty days from the date hereof.

Given at his Majesty's Castle of Dublin, this 11th day of September, 1798.

By the Lord Lieutenant's commands,

CASTLEREAGH.

It would be a waste of words to make a comment on this document. But while every act of the legislature, or ordinance of the Irish government that was framed with the avowed object of reclaiming the disaffected, and of affording pardon and protection to the penitent, was so worded as to leave ample field for the furious zeal of Orangeism to exercise its ingenuity in the restric-

tion of its remedial character, there were no loopholes left in the acts of indemnity which protected their opponents from any claims the former might venture to put forward for redress.

Lord Carhampton's wholesale transportation of the peasantry in the latter part of 1796 and the spring of the following year, without the ordinary intervention of the functions of the magistracy or the judicial authorities, rendered it necessary to pass an act of indemnity in the latter year for "the divers acts done not justifiable by law," since the 1st day of January, 1797.[1]

The summary proceedings of Lord Lake, and of his civil coadjutors in the commission of the peace, especially in the county of Wexford, made a new act of indemnity necessary for the more effectual protection of those persons. This new act went through its final stage the 6th of October, 1798. It provided that all persons, justices of the peace and others, who had apprehended criminals and other persons suspected of assisting and aiding in insurrections, riots, and tumults, or who "had seized arms and entered in the houses and possessions of several persons, and done divers acts not justifiable by law, but which were yet so much for the public service," should be held indemnified for all such acts done since the 3rd of July, 1797, and all prosecutions for the same were to be discharged and made void, and

[1] Irish Statutes at Large, 1797, p. 443.

where the plaintiff was nonsuited to pay double costs to the defendant.

It is not possible to read the preceding details, and come to the conclusion that the measures referred to were such as were honestly believed to be best calculated to gain the confidence of the people, and to put an end speedily to the designs of the disaffected. A protracted state of preparation for insurrection for some object (which no results ever can justify) was allowed to drag on its existence for upwards of six years. To Lord Fitzwilliam's recall and to Lord Camden's government the rebellion of 1798 is to be attributed. Such of the leading men of the United Irish Societies as were from the beginning bent on separation, would never have been able to have maintained their influence, and extended their views throughout the country, had the government of Lord Fitzwilliam subsisted long enough for the measures that might have been expected from it to have been carried into effect. Had such a resolution been proposed to the Leinster societies in the year 1795, expressive of a determination to disregard any measure of the parliament for a redress of grievances, as was passed by the provincial committee at Bond's in 1798, it would not have been carried, nor even entertained.

The above-named resolution, which was produced in evidence against Bond, was one of the

papers found on the table at which the members of the provincial meeting committee were sitting the 12th of March, 1798. It has been frequently referred to as a proof of the inutility of any efforts that might be made on the part of government to conciliate the people engaged in this conspiracy.

The date of the society's adoption of this resolution is overlooked, however, and the exasperation consequent on the extreme rigour of government, the recurrence to the free quarter system, and the delegation of the powers and functions of civil government to an intolerant and sanguinary faction, is conveniently kept out of sight.

The resolution of the 12th of March is to the following effect:

> Resolved, that we will pay no attention whatever to any attempt that may be made by either House of Parliament to divert the public mind from the grand object we have in view, as nothing short of the complete emancipation of our country will satisfy us.[1]

But there was a previous determination of the leaders of a very different character, of which one of the most truthful of men, Dr. Macneven, has given an account in his examination before the secret committee of the House of Commons, 8th August, 1798, when he declared that on two occa-

[1] Ridgeway's Report, Bond's Trial, p. 217.

sions the United Irishmen would have accepted a reform in parliament in lieu of all other organic political changes:

When Mr. Ponsonby brought in his first bill of reform, I remember having conversed with some of the most confidential men in the north on that subject, and they declared to me they would think the country happy, and likely to think itself so, by getting that bill. When he brought in his last bill, I am sure the country at large would have been satisfied with the same.

Now let us hear the declaration of T. A. Emmet on this subject, on being asked by the Speaker if separation and not reform was the object of the United Irishmen:

Speaker.—I understand, according to you, the views of the United Irish went to a republic and separation from England; but they would probably have compounded for a reform in parliament. Am I not right, however, in understanding that the object next their hearts was a separation and a republic?

Emmet.—Pardon me, the object next their hearts was a redress of their grievances; two modes of accomplishing that object presented themselves to their view—one was a reform by peaceable means, the other was a revolution and a republic. I have no doubt but that if they could have flattered themselves that the object next their hearts would be accomplished peaceably, by a reform, they would prefer it infinitely to a revolution and republic, which must be more bloody in their operation; but I am also convinced, when they saw they

could not accomplish the object next their hearts, a redress of their grievances, by a reform, they determined in despair to procure it by a revolution, which I am persuaded is inevitable, unless a reform be granted.

CHAPTER VII

NEILSON IN AMERICA

NEILSON'S condition on his arrival in Holland, in the latter part of June, 1802 (after a confinement of upwards of four years on the last occasion, and a year and a half on the former), was anything but encouraging. His constitution was impaired by his long sufferings—his property completely ruined; and in this state he found himself in a foreign land, without the means of future support, or for the removal of his family to his final destination, the United States. If Neilson had been a traitor to his cause or to his friends, his penury would hardly have been such as to compel him to part with the boy who had been for the preceding ten months his companion in Fort George—in whom his heart seems to have been wound up, if we may judge of the ardour of his affection, and the pride he took in him, by every letter of his in which he makes mention of the boy. His friends in Belfast were applied to by him on his arrival in Holland, and by their assistance he was finally enabled to complete his preparations for proceed-

ing to America. Hamilton Rowan, at the period of the arrival of the state prisoners in Holland, was living at Altona with his family, and on their arrival in Hamburgh he wrote to them, "offering them such services as he was capable of rendering them in that country;" and he speaks of "having had a long and sincere regard for Samuel Neilson, and the strongest conviction of his patriotism and integrity." Neilson, in acknowledging a letter of Mr. Rowan's, of the 9th of July, alludes to his future plans and prospects, and the principles which he set out in political life with advocating, and continued to entertain with unabated ardour.

In the new world I hope to find the people as I ever found them at home, honest and sincere. I am not afraid of pushing my way among a people who I may say sprung from ourselves. In the propagation of truth I know there is nothing but pain and trouble, and he who embarks in that cause with any other view, will, I am confident, find himself mistaken. You, I know, are delicately situated; but the purity of your views and the integrity of your heart lead me to speak to you with confidence; at the same time that I wish, of all things, to avoid the most remote possibility of implicating you.

Neither the eight years' hardship I have endured—the total destruction of my property—the forlorn state of my wife and children—the momentary failure of our national exertions—nor the still more distressing usurpation in France, have abated my ardour in the cause

of my country and of general liberty. You and I, my dear friend, will pass away, but truth will remain.

S. N.

The letter from which this extract is taken is dated Altona, the 12th July, 1802.

Towards the latter part of July, Neilson formed the resolution of returning to Ireland for the purpose of visiting his family and his friends, previously to his embarkation for America.

This rash project, which put his liberty and his life once more in jeopardy, was carried into execution with his accustomed determination, and want of due consideration of the consequences that might be apprehended from it.

It is difficult to conceive any advantage or gratification that might arise from his return that could compensate for the dangers of such a proceeding.

The probability is, that the principal object he had in view was to have an opportunity of clearing his character from the calumnies which had been circulated against him immediately after the compact with the government had been entered into. These calumnies he refers to in his letters.

In the pamphlet, of which mention has been made at the beginning of this memoir, published in 1804, at New York, giving an account of the life of Neilson, by one of his friends, I find the following passage: "He was charged with ambition; he was stigmatised as a traitor: but in all

this how did his case differ from that of Hampden or Sydney?"

One of the Wicklow prisoners, Felix Rourke, then confined in Naas gaol, in one of his original letters, dated 24th August, 1798, in my possession, refers to these rumours in the following terms: "Your mention of my valued friend Neilson I don't understand; you seem to insinuate that he is not the noble-minded editor of 'The Northern Star,' but the mean, despicable informer, the colleague of a Reynolds and a Newell. O God! impossible; then, indeed, is 'judgment fled to savage beasts, and men have lost their reason.' Send me every particular respecting him that you may hear, and believe anything but that he would be a villain."

Now the date of this letter evidently corresponds with that of the compact, which had completely been fulfilled on the part of the state prisoners, by the memoir they had delivered on the 4th of August; and the allusion of Rourke must have been to that transaction, which excited so much discussion at the time, and not to an event which had occurred three months before—namely, the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. We have here the plain and obvious solution of the original question raised of Neilson's fidelity to his cause; and it is no wonder that such doubts should have arisen, when, pending that negotiation, the government agents had caused a report to be indus-

triously circulated, that the state prisoners, in disclosing the secrets of their society, had given up the names of their associates.

Neilson obtained a passage from Holland in a vessel belonging to an English merchant of the name of Ridgeway, bound to Drogheda, and was accompanied by another exile (the real and original "Exile of Erin," of Thomas Campbell), Anthony M'Cann. The vessel was subsequently seized, and the captain imprisoned, when it was discovered that Neilson had come over in her. On his arrival in Dublin, he was received into the house of Mr. Bernard Coile, a linen merchant, residing at No. 13, Lurgan-street, and there he remained for about a week, keeping close during the days, and paying visits nightly to such of his old associates as had survived the terrors of 1798.

Neilson's early friend and faithful associate, James Hope, was then in Dublin, and early in September he received a message to meet Neilson at Coile's. He was informed by Neilson that he was going down to the north, and required his assistance as a guide and companion on the journey. He said, "Do not mistake; this is not a party of pleasure; if we are discovered, the event will be banishment to you and death to me." After a few days Neilson and his companion set out for Belfast on horseback: Neilson was disguised; he wore a wig and a pair of spectacles.

No obstacle was encountered on their route.

Hope always rode on a little way before him. The first night they stopped at Charles Teeling's, at the "Naul." Teeling and his guest sat up all night. Hope remained outside keeping guard, and could not be prevailed on to enter; but, faithful to his trust, remained at his post in front of the house to prevent a surprisal. In the morning, before dawn, he tapped at the window and gave Neilson notice that it was time to set out. The following day they crossed the Boyne where King William had passed over, and arrived the next night at Belfast. Neilson was in excellent spirits; he seemed to be in perfect health, and in mind he was as sound as Hope had ever known him. On their arrival at the outskirts of the town, Hope was sent forward to apprise Neilson's mother of his arrival, while he, Neilson, went to his wife's residence. He remained in Belfast only three days, and all that time in complete seclusion, having only seen one person during his stay who was not a member of his family. I think it right, however, to state, that persons well acquainted with Mr. Bristowe, the sovereign of the town, state that he was not unacquainted with Neilson's arrival in Belfast, and that having reason to believe his visit was for the sole purpose of taking leave of his family, he had the humanity to remain in apparent ignorance of his return.

Neilson, after a short stay of three days, parted with his family for the last time. He met Hope

by appointment at nightfall outside the town, and they proceeded on their journey by the way of Ballibay, where one of Neilson's daughters (now residing in America) was staying with the family of Mr. John Jackson, at Creeve. Neilson himself, in 1798, had for a short time been in concealment there, subsequently to his escape from the house of Bond, who was then in prison. On that occasion a search had been made for him there at midnight, and he had escaped out of his bed by a back window into an adjoining house. Mr. John Jackson was the brother of the iron-founder of that name of Dublin. Another brother of theirs, Mr. Hugh Jackson of Cremorne, in the county of Monaghan, likewise afforded him an asylum on the same occasion.

Neilson and his companion remained part of the night at Creeve, and next day returned to Dublin. During his stay in that city, he resided at the house of Mr. Charles O'Hara at Irishtown. The vessel in which his passage was taken for the United States was expected to sail a few days after his arrival, but some weeks elapsed before its departure, and during this time we find, by Neilson's letters, that he had been successfully employed in removing the erroneous impressions which had been made on the minds of some of his former associates with respect to his conduct; and his reference to the subject of those misrepresentations in a letter of his, dated the 30th of

July, 1798, can leave no doubt whatever of the precise nature of the imputations cast upon it. He says, "I glory in having been instrumental in meeting the government on this great question;" and in another reference to this agreement he says, "You will hear abominable stories about this business, for they are already afloat, but I know you will laugh at them."

The vessel was at length loaded, and Neilson proceeded to Ringsend, the place of embarkation, accompanied by old Palmer of Cutpurse-row, and that humble friend to whom I have already alluded, James Hope—one who was never shaken or ever found wanting in the hour of need or adversity to his associates, whether to the founder of that society, and who "watched over its cradle, and walked after its hearse," or to the last and noblest of those who sealed their devotion to its cause with their blood in its latest struggle. When Neilson was parting with Hope, he put a guinea into his hand, and the latter, though well knowing how ill he could afford even that small present, was too considerate of his friend's feelings to risk giving him a moment's pain by refusing his last gift. He took it in silence, and Neilson, observing that Hope seemed depressed, took his hand, and said in a cheerful tone, "Never despair, man! the enemy have it all their own way, and they will do injury only to themselves."

They no sooner parted than Hope gave the

guinea he had just received to Palmer, and bade him lose no time in expending it in necessaries that would make a useful addition to the sea stock of Neilson; and they were immediately purchased and sent on board.

Neilson, on his arrival in New York, lost no time in turning his attention to the pursuit on which he counted for his future support, and for the means of bringing over his family to America and providing for them. The proposal of establishing a newspaper devoted to Irish interests had met with great encouragement from his countrymen, and some of his fellow exiles promised to give the undertaking effective assistance, both in funds and in literary contributions.

He had not been long residing, however, in New York, when the yellow fever made its appearance, and obliged him and many of his friends to remove to the country adjacent. Neilson's health, which had suffered from his voyage, became after some time sufficiently good to enable him to make a pedestrian journey through some parts of Pennsylvania; but this amendment was of short continuance. His old complaint, the usual consequence of long imprisonment, rheumatism, returned with increased violence: but even thus shattered in health, when his poverty did not permit him to look for the consolation of seeing his family around him, he still clung to the hope of having one member of it with him—

of his boy being sent to him; and it is impossible to read those letters of his in which his wishes on this point are expressed—to consider the plea which he makes of the benefit he tries to make it appear he expected from the assistance of a boy of his tender years, and the advantages he holds out for his education—without feeling that he doted on this child, and that to behold him, and to have him near him, was the wish that was nearest to his heart. Poor Neilson was not destined ever more to set his eyes on him, or on the face of any friend or relation belonging to him. He died at Poughkeepsie, a small town on the Hudson, about eighty-two miles from New York, on the 29th of August, 1803.

His remains were interred in the burial-place of a gentleman of his name (no relation of his), and a small marble slab has been erected to his memory,[1] surmounted by an urn with a harp on either side, and bearing the following inscription:

Here lieth the remains of Samuel Neilson,
A native of Belfast, in Ireland,
Who departed this life the 29th of August, 1803.
Aged 44 years.

If the memory of a man who discharged all the duties of a husband, a father, and a persecuted patriot, can claim a tear, here is the tribute due.[2]

[1] They have since been removed to the Rural Cemetery.

[2] Through the efforts of the Rev. William Livingston, pastor of St. Gabriel's Church, N. Y. City, a handsome monument has recently been erected over the grave of Samuel Neilson. Father

The career of Samuel Neilson is connected with the most important events of the period during which the Society of United Irishmen was in being. With that of many others of his associates there is an interest of another sort blended, which arises in a great measure from some striking passages or stirring circumstances in the dangers they encountered or escaped, and relieves a serious subject with something like romance.

There is nothing indeed of romance in the character of Neilson, nothing peculiarly calculated to win golden opinions from those who look more for imaginative powers, for refinement of taste, than the sturdy qualities of mind which seem essential to those who pioneer the way for subsequent efforts of a less formidable description than are called for at the outset of the struggle. He was a blunt, bold, resolute, energetic, and enterprising man—the sincerity of his opinions, however mistaken they may have been, cannot be doubted. In their maintenance, he sacrificed his property, his health, his liberty; and there is ample evidence that life itself, in his estimation, was of little value compared with the importance of the cause to which all his energies were devoted. Had he lived in better times, and under better government, the same qualities which made

Livingston secured the co-operation of the leading Irish societies in Poughkeepsie and accomplished an object which was started in 1880 by the Rev. Dr. Edward F. McSweeney, who formed "The Neilson Monument Association" for that purpose.

oppression hateful to him would have rendered him a loyal subject; under any circumstances he would have proved an honest Irishman.

Whether his defects were grave and numerous enough to disqualify him for the part he played in the struggle he was engaged in; whether his temperament was of that kind which gives a dominant impulse to a particular passion, and holds judgment in subjection while that dominion lasts; whether a man in whose character there is supposed to be one defect, no matter how many noble qualities may be implanted with it, is to be accounted of little worth, and the alloy of a single evil habit is to be held pernicious or destructive to the whole substance of that man's virtue; whether the views of Neilson and the other northern leaders, in the autumn of 1797 and the spring of 1798, urgently pressed on the Leinster directory in favour of an immediate rising and a sole dependence on home efforts, under all the circumstances of the time and the daily augmenting difficulties besetting their society, were better calculated than those of the Dublin executive in favour of foreign aid and in opposition to any attempt at insurrection without it, to promote their common object—the reader is competent to determine. It has been my duty to lay before him, as fully and fairly as it was in my power to do, every public act of the individual whose life I have attempted to illustrate, and every

document that was available to me which seemed calculated to throw any light on the former or on his character in private life. Having done this, not carelessly, but with much labour, with some regard to Neilson's memory and still more for truth, my task is accomplished, and it remains for the reader to make his own deductions from the preceding premises. The materials from which this memoir has been constructed form but a small portion of the documents which Neilson left with his family at his departure from Ireland. In 1803, at the period of Russell's unsuccessful attempt in the north, Mrs. Neilson, fearing that her house would be searched, sent the greater portion of her husband's papers to a friend residing in New York, to be taken charge of for her. Some years after her death, her son requested to have the papers returned. The vessel by which they were sent, the "Shannon," was wrecked on the coast of Donegal, and the papers were lost. Had they been obtained, there can be little doubt that the reference to documents which were considered of sufficient importance to have so much trouble taken with them with a view to their preservation, would have been advantageous to the character of Neilson.

Mrs. Neilson was left with a family of five children solely dependent on her exertions for her support and theirs. She embarked in a small line of business, and the Father of the fatherless

crowned her efforts with success. She was enabled, by the fruits of her industry, to bring up her children respectably, to give them education, and to leave them—such as it would have been her husband's pride to have found them, had he lived to have seen them in their riper years—trained to virtue and matured in useful knowledge.

Miss M'Cracken, speaking of her, says: "Mrs. Neilson was a very superior woman, a most exemplary wife and mother; for whom I had the highest esteem, and continued on terms of intimacy and friendship, from 1795, when I first became acquainted with her, until her death." This excellent woman, esteemed and respected by all who knew her, even by those to whom her husband's political principles were most obnoxious, struggled for her family during her husband's imprisonment and exile and subsequently to his death, altogether for upwards of twelve years, and died in November, 1811, in her forty-eighth year. Her remains were interred at Newtown, Breda. The inscription on her tomb truly describes her to have been, "A woman who was an ornament to her sex; who fulfilled, in the most exemplary manner, the duties of a daughter, wife, and mother."

The following account of William Bryson Neilson (who is so often mentioned in the preceding correspondence), Samuel Neilson's only son,

was communicated to me by his nephew, Mr. Hancock:

W. B. Neilson was born at Belfast, on the 17th May, 1793. In August, 1801, he joined his father at Fort George, and continued with him until the state prisoners were removed to Hamburgh, in May, 1802.

On his father's departure, young Neilson was sent under the care of Mr. Chambers, a son of one of the state prisoners, to his mother in Belfast. By her he was placed at the academy of that town, of which Dr. Bruce was then master.

He left this school at the end of 1806, having carried off many prizes, and evinced no ordinary talent. He had a great desire to be educated for the bar. Circumstances would not permit this course to be adopted; he was therefore placed, in 1807, in the counting-house of John Martin & Co., an old and respectable firm in Belfast. Here the same talents which had made him distinguished at school soon gained him the confidence and approbation of his employers.

In a communication of one of the gentlemen with whom he was placed, he is spoken of in the following terms:

In 1811, when only eighteen, we sent him, at his own request, as supercargo with a valuable cargo to Lisbon, in the management of which he gave us great satisfaction. He was a young man of the most splendid talents we ever knew; there was no subject in mercantile

affairs that he could not make himself master of. In public matters he soon became conspicuous, and had he lived he would have been an ornament to his country.

He returned to Belfast in April, 1812, after a residence of seven months in Lisbon. In June, 1812, he became a member of the Belfast Historic Society, and by his distinguished talents as a public speaker obtained the silver medal which was awarded for oratorical merit.

The following year, as president of the society, he delivered an historical address, which was published in "The Belfast Magazine."

In a eulogium which was read before the Historic Society by Dr. Tennent, on Neilson, after his death, this period of his life is alluded to in these words:

Permit me for a moment to survey that interval which distinguished him within these walls; a bright and brilliant period indeed—not more creditable to the society than to the individual himself. I believe I would not be accused of exaggeration if I described William Neilson as the life of your debates.

In 1813 he commenced business for himself, and took an active part in all matters where the interests of Belfast were concerned. He was particularly interested in the success of the Academical Institution, which had been established a few years before, and was one of the members until 1816, when he resigned in consequence of the following circumstance: On Patrick's Day, 1816, a

large party of Liberals dined together in Belfast, and some toasts connected with the topics of the day were drunk; among the rest one of the company proposed "The memory of Ney," which was received with great enthusiasm. When the report of the dinner appeared in the papers, the government withdrew its grant of £1,500 a-year from the Institution, because some of the persons present at this dinner (Neilson among the number) who had spoken to the toasts were members of the Institution. As many of the supporters of the Institution hoped to get a renewal of the grant, by making submission to the government, Neilson and some others preferred resigning their offices and quitting the Institution, in order that it might not suffer from any hostile feeling towards them. A few months after this occurrence, Neilson left Belfast to settle in Jamaica, where he arrived in December, 1816. Shortly after his arrival, he formed a partnership with an extensive house there. His sojourn in Jamaica was, however, of short duration, as he was taken ill of the yellow fever, and died 7th February, 1817, in the 23rd year of his age.

When the first edition of this work was published, three of the daughters of Samuel Neilson were surviving, and to their filial devotion to their father's memory (the intensity of which feeling it would be difficult to find words adequately to express) I am indebted for those materials which

have enabled me to present to the public this memoir of Samuel Neilson.

Of Neilson's four daughters two have died. The eldest, Ann, was married to a Mr. Maginnis, and died in New York at an advanced age. Mary, the youngest, was married to William Hancock, for some years agent to Charles Brownlow, the first Lord Lurgan, and afterwards an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, from the introduction of the Poor Law in 1838 till his death of fever, caught in the discharge of his official duties.

Neilson's surviving daughters, Sophia and Jane, were married to gentlemen named M'Adam; one of them resides in Belfast, the other in New York. George M'Adam, the eldest son of the latter lady, distinguished himself in the United States by the public spirit he showed in connection with the literary institutions of the state in which he lived. On his death in 1857 there was a monument erected by public subscription to his memory.

Mrs. Hancock died in 1859, and is buried beside her husband in Howth Abbey. In 1848 one of Neilson's grandsons succeeded his father as agent of Lord Lurgan; and another, William Neilson Hancock, LL.D., is well known for his writings on statistical and economic questions affecting Ireland, and is destined, I have no doubt, to rise

to eminence in his profession and in public life. The grandson of Samuel Neilson has strong claims to the good wishes of his countrymen for his success and advancement.

CHAPTER VIII

BOND AND NEILSON

NEILSON'S sufferings during his first confinement of eighteen months' duration, the loss of all his property and most intimate friends, one after another of his associates daily imprisoned or proscribed, the circle of his acquaintance day after day narrowed by executions or other calamities, the turmoil of the scenes on which he was thrown after his liberation, his capture, the bodily injuries he then received, his miserable condition from that period till he was brought before the court loaded with irons—a period of nearly a month—during which the chains he bore, by the acknowledgment of the gaoler, were more than were ordinarily put on two men—these are circumstances which ought to be remembered when we form a judgment of Neilson's character from his conduct during the latter period of these sufferings.

The old ruinous remedy for alleviating such troubles was unfortunately had recourse to at this time by Neilson; and it is needless to say the remedy only aggravated the evil. The result of many inquiries among the intimate friends of

Neilson establishes pretty clearly, that previous to his first confinement his habits were not those which were then deemed intemperate. With respect to those pernicious customs which are called convivial in persons of a certain rank in society, and by another name when mention is made of them with regard to persons in an humbler walk of life, Neilson did not form an exception to the fashion of the times. He went much into society for the purpose of propagating those opinions of which his paper was the organ, and of extending the union among all classes. In those times all the business of the country societies was conducted in public houses; and men entered into solemn engagements, involving consequences of awful moment to their country and to themselves, in the midst of scenes ill calculated for cool deliberation. This, it may be said, was only amongst the lower orders of the United Irishmen, like those belonging to the "Muddlers' Club" of Belfast. But the upper orders, though they might not congregate in "shebeen" houses and way-side inns, also had their houses of entertainment in the metropolis—their taverns on a larger scale, their "Eagle" in Exchequer-street, their "Strugglers' Tavern" in Cook-street; and their business was done "after the cloth was removed" and the port wine was laid on the table. It was at such times and at such convivial meetings the introduction of candidates for admission was discussed, their

qualifications were talked over, and the test eventually administered and taken, in a room adjoining that in which the revels of a convivial party and the machinations of conspirators went on simultaneously. It is no wonder if "the rebellious liquors," ascending to the brain, conspired to set "the vital commoners and inland petty spirits" in a flame.

When Bond and Butler were imprisoned in Newgate in 1794, they constantly entertained their political friends; and during the six months they spent there, we are informed by William Paulett Carey, brother to the author of the "Vindiciæ Hiberniæ," that the bills sent into the Dublin Society of the United Irishmen for wine supplied for these entertainments amounted to £500.[1] Whatever may have been the imprudence of Neilson while confined in Newgate, at Fort George it was only by his abstemiousness that he secured the enjoyment of having his boy with him.

By a letter of his, dated 4th November, 1801, it will be seen that at Fort George he deprived himself of the customary allowance of wine, in order to procure sufficient means to bear the expenses of his son's maintenance in this prison.

The execution of Byrne was a dreadful blow to Neilson. The efforts and sacrifices he had made, with the view of saving his life and Bond's, it seemed had then been made in vain; and all

[1] W. P. Carey's Appeal to the People of Ireland, 1794.

the odium and misrepresentation of his motives was to be encountered, which he well knew would follow the mere proposal of giving up the secrets of his society to government. These circumstances are to be taken into account, as well as the severe trial of his feelings at seeing a brave young man, a companion in misfortune, an associate in the cause, whom he esteemed most highly, led forth from his presence, from the very cell he was confined in, to the scaffold.

NOTICE OF W. M. BYRNE.

William Michael Byrne, of Park-hill, was a descendant of an ancient family in Wicklow, that county which in former times was called "The O'Byrnes' Country." The family of W. M. Byrne was unconnected with that of William Byrne of Ballymanus. A remnant of the property of his ancestors had escaped the rapacity of the "Conquistadores" in Ireland, in the reign of James I., when the broad lands of the Byrnes were confiscated for the benefit of their persecutor, "an unprincipled adventurer" of the name of Parsons.[1] Byrne's life was one of those which was sworn away by Mr. Thomas Reynolds, in the summer of 1798. The 28th of July was the day appointed for his execution; and the negotiations between the state prisoners and the government having been then entered into, there was very

[1] Dr. Taylor's Civil Wars in Ireland, vol. i., p. 243.

little doubt entertained by himself or his fellow-prisoners but that his life would be spared. On the morning of the 28th, he was sitting at breakfast in Bond and Neilson's cell (the wife of the latter being then present), when the gaoler appeared, and beckoned to Byrne to come to the door and speak with him. Byrne arose—a few words were whispered into his ear. He returned to the cell, and apologised to the lady for being obliged to leave them. Bond asked him if he would not return; and his reply was, "We will meet again." He went forth without the slightest sign of perturbation or concern, and was led back for a few minutes to his cell, and then conducted to the scaffold. On passing the cell of Bond and Neilson, which he had just left, he stooped, that he might not be observed through the grated aperture in the upper part of the door, in order that Mrs. Neilson might be spared the shock of seeing him led to execution.

These particulars are given on the authority of the daughter of Neilson, who was then in Dublin with her mother, and has a perfect remembrance of these circumstances being the subject of her mother's and Mrs. Bond's conversation at the time.

The following reference to Byrne's fate is taken from Dr. Macneven's "Account of the Treaty between the United Irishmen and the Anglo-Irish Government:"

Mr. Byrne was of one of the first families of the country; and among his relatives had many friends who, without his knowledge, exerted their interest to preserve his life. They were told that if he would express regret at being an United Irishman, and declare that he was seduced by Lord Edward Fitzgerald, he should be forgiven. When this proposal was made known to him, he spurned at it with abhorrence. He declared that he had no regret but that of not leaving his country free; that he was never seduced to be an United Irishman, and least of all by that hallowed character whose memory they wished to traduce. "Perhaps," said he, "they intend to rob his children of his inheritance; but my existence shall never be disgraced by giving sanction to so base a design." This young man, having a strong sense of religion, received its rites with a cheerful hope and an assured conscience, expressing the greatest consolation at quitting life in his perfect senses, with leisure for previous preparation, and in such a cause. His very adversaries were forced to bear homage to that cause which produced such martyrs.[1]

The position in which Neilson stood with regard to the several prisoners executed in July, 1798, was one that for its trials could hardly have been rendered more dreadful. All of the prisoners, with the exception of the Sheares, were his associates and acquaintances. Bond, Byrne, and M'Cann were his intimate friends. With the first he had been long and closely connected, both in business and in political affairs. They shared

[1] *Vide* "Pieces of Irish History," p. 149.

the same cell when Bond was condemned to death —they shared the same bed—they sat at the same table; and after Byrne's execution, when no hope was entertained of Bond's being respited—the most attached friend he had on earth—he had the pain of seeing him, not casually or for a few moments at a passing interview, but during his confinement, constantly and without intermission. This was a situation, the overpowering painfulness of which was enough to drive a man mad. The coffin that had been sent to the gaol the night preceding the intended execution of Bond had been seen by Neilson that same night when he left his cell. Nay, he even saw the preparations making for his execution the night before the appointed day. Early the following morning a request was made by Bond to Neilson, the compliance with which it is almost possible to conceive, but not to express the feelings it must have occasioned.

Neilson was requested by Bond to proceed to the press-room, and to ascertain, by his own examination, the strength of the rope which was prepared for carrying his sentence into effect. This extraordinary commission was occasioned by some apprehension of Bond's, that being a man of large and robust frame, the breaking of the rope might be the occasion of protracted suffering. When he returned to the cell Bond asked

him "if everything was right," and Neilson could only answer, "Yes, Bond."

It was only at three o'clock in the afternoon of the day following that a shout, raised by the people in front of the gaol who had assembled to witness the execution, prepared the prisoners for the announcement on the part of the sheriffs that Mr. Bond was respited during pleasure.

NOTICE OF OLIVER BOND.

In the preceding narrative of Neilson, the sudden death of Bond is briefly alluded to. Murphy's account of the circumstances connected with this event, leaves the cause and manner of his death involved in mystery.[1]

The daughter of Neilson, who was staying at the house of Bond at the period of his death in Newgate, gave me the following account of that mysterious event:

Bond had been removed, after his trial and conviction, to one of the condemned cells, and Neilson had got leave to remain with him. Mrs. Bond, through the influence of Armstrong, was allowed to put a bed with curtains in the cell. On the 6th of September, Bond had been playing a good deal at ball. That evening, Gregg the gaoler, by the desire of Bond and Neilson, brought in some supper and a jug of punch. Samuel Neilson went to bed, leaving Bond and Gregg together. They were not then quarrelling; there was no one present but themselves. The following morning, at break

[1] Memoir of Lord E. Fitzgerald.

of day, Neilson heard some cries of the female prisoners in the opposite ward. He ran out, and found Bond's body lying in the doorway, half his body in, half out, dressed as he had been when he last saw him.

Mrs. Bond slept that night at her own house, and Mrs. Neilson was then stopping with her. In the morning Mr. Beers came to Mrs. Neilson's room and told her all; she ran to Mrs. Bond, accompanied by Beers, and communicated the dreadful tidings to her.

From the late James Davock, an intimate friend and neighbour of Bond, I received the following account of this matter:

Bond, from the time of his trial, slept in the same bed with Neilson. The evening before his death I saw him in the yard of the prison; he seemed then to be in perfect health: the next morning he was found dead in the passage outside his cell. It was the general opinion that he had been strangled. Bond had a free pardon signed at the Castle at that time, and was to have been sent out of the country with the other state prisoners. It was necessary for his wife to obtain this pardon, to enable her to collect in the debts—for he left about £30,000 behind him; and his friends were afraid of impeding her application, and thought it better to allow the common report of his death arising from apoplexy to pass unnoticed.

The surgeon-general examined the body, and Surgeon Geoghan was also present, but was kept too far away from the body to see distinctly what the appearances were. The report in the prison was, that he had been killed by the under-gaoler, Simpson. I was in-

formed by Murphy, there was such an uproar in the prison all that night that Murphy and others barricaded their doors on the inside, afraid of violence. The woman who first swore, at the inquest, that she had seen him die in the yard, afterwards, in a quarrel, accused Simpson of the murder; on which he kicked her in the back, of which injury she died.

In a New York paper, called "The Irish Citizen," of the 25th January, 1843, published by B. P. Binns, the brother of the prisoner who was tried at Maidstone with Arthur O'Connor, an article, professing to be written by one who had a good deal of knowledge of the events occurring at that period, states that Bond "was killed by a blow of a copper kettle on the back of the head, inflicted by one of the turnkeys, in a dark passage leading to his cell. Nothing certain, however," he adds, "is known of this mysterious business."

Oliver Bond, a native of the north of Ireland, settled early in life in Dublin, and at the period of his arrest, in March, 1798, was one of the most respectable and opulent merchants in that city.

He commenced his career in the business of a wholesale woollen draper, at No. 54, Pill-lane; and in 1786, removed to No. 13, Lower Bridge-street, the house occupied by Messrs. Vance and Beers of late years. His name, as a Dublin merchant, first occurs in the Dublin Directory for the year 1783.

He married Miss Eleanor Jackson, a daughter

of Henry Jackson, the iron-founder of Church-street, one of the leading members of the Society of United Irishmen, in June, 1791, and by that marriage had several children, all young at the time of his arrest.

By his fellow-citizens of all creeds and grades he was held in the highest estimation, for his upright, manly, and honourable character, and his extensive charities. By his political associates he was loved and esteemed, and possessed the entire confidence of all its leaders throughout Ireland.

Bond's connection with the Society of United Irishmen dates from the origin of the Dublin Society.

In March, 1793, the Hon. Simon Butler and Oliver Bond—the chairman and secretary of a meeting of the society, from which emanated a publication, calling in question the authority of a secret committee of the House of Commons, which was about to make a report on disturbances in the county of Louth attributed to the Defenders—were brought before the House of Commons, and on avowing the publication which bore their signatures were sentenced by the House to six months' imprisonment, and a fine of £500 was imposed on each of the offenders.

On the 12th of March, 1798, the date of the provincial meeting at Bond's house, Bond of course shared the fate of the assembled delegates.

Among the perjuries of Reynolds on the trial of his friend Bond, there was one which Bond and his friends were not a little astounded at: he deposed that he had been sworn into the Society of United Irishmen by Mr. Oliver Bond.

Dr. Macneven, in his "Pieces of Irish History," p. 151, a man whose probity and truthfulness have never been called in question (and whose friendship I think it a great honour and distinction to have enjoyed), has thus spoken of Oliver Bond:

> Mr. Bond, though an United Irishman, was certainly not one within the personal knowledge of his prosecutor Reynolds, who in almost everything he advanced respecting that gentleman swore falsely. But Mr. Bond was highly beloved by the friends of Irish independence, and equally hated by its enemies. He was one of the earliest in planning and promoting the union of Irishmen. He possessed a force of understanding, an elevation of soul, and an integrity of heart that placed him in the highest rank of patriots. His feelings were truly Irish, his principles those of an enlightened republican. His character has fairly established itself in the esteem of his countrymen, and will be honoured by them when the guilty triumph of his oppressors shall have passed away, or be remembered only to be abhorred.

Oliver Bond was tried on the 23rd of July, 1798, condemned on Reynold's evidence, and sentenced to be hanged on Friday the 27th. The sentence was respited, however, from that day to

the following Monday, the 29th; and on that day the proposed terms of the compact of the state prisoners with the government having been agreed to, for the express purpose of saving Bond's life, the sentence of death was commuted, and he was included in the terms to be accorded to the other state prisoners. He survived this commutation only five weeks; he died, in all probability, of an apoplectic seizure, on the 6th of September following, and his remains were interred in St. Michan's churchyard, where a tombstone was erected to his memory by his widow, with the following inscription:

Sacred to the Memory of
OLIVER BOND,
Who died the 6th of September, 1798,
In the 37th year of his age.
The noblest work of God's an honest man.

His property was not confiscated. His widow and children quitted Ireland some years after his death, proceeded to America, and fixed their abode in Baltimore, where they were joined by Mrs. Bond's father, Henry Jackson of Church-street.

Mrs. Bond visited this country in 1810, and soon after her arrival was subjected in her native city to an insolent slander and a vulgar insult, at the hands of a rich brewer of the name of Farrell—one of that genus of mindless mediocrity that seeks distinction, assuming airs of consequence, aping aristocracy—of no convictions

but of their own importance—a *Cawtholic* magnate of the old, effete school of that kind of Anglo-Hiberno Whiggery that affects a Tory aspect for its politics and its polemics, and a haughty, patrician air for the dulness and ineptitude of a mind destitute of all literary provision.

In "The Irish Magazine" for June, 1810, we find the following reference to an action for a malignant libel, taken by Mrs. Bond against the eminent *Cawtholic* brewer of Black Pitts:

We learn with extreme pleasure that a jury of our fellow-citizens did, by a verdict against this brewer a few days back, convict him of having defamed this widowed lady, this daughter of affliction, who has drank of the cup of misfortune to its very dregs.

We would wish to say that the damages had been commensurate with his means and expiatory of his crime —which was that of having charged her in a public company with repeating a most sanguinary and disloyal toast. To the Catholics of this kingdom we address this article, and call upon them to remember that this lady's father, Mr. Henry Jackson, and her husband, Mr. Oliver Bond, were members of that Protestant association who first dared to say that the enslaved Catholics ought to be admitted into the bosom of the constitution. They were chiefs in that formidable, though mistaken league, who thought that by separating this island from Great Britain it would give us a national character, promote our commercial and agricultural interests, destroy for ever religious feuds, and thereby render permanent our social happiness, and insure our independence until

time should be no more. How far they were right this is not a season to discuss; but in recalling their sufferings to the memories of our countrymen, it is necessary to recur to the causes of those sufferings.

Mr. Jackson, after a long imprisonment, was obliged to transport himself and his property to America, and by the contingencies attending such a removal, his stock, as we are well informed, suffered a diminution of more than one-half. Mr. Bond was tried and convicted of treason; but in consequence of the compact made between the state prisoners and the then ministry, he was to emigrate to another country; and we need hardly remind our readers that he died in the New Prison—and that, under circumstances as explainable as the death of Pichegru in the prison at Paris.

It therefore appears that the first political error which drew down on these Irishmen the indignation of government was an exertion to enfranchise Roman Catholics; and the second, an incorporation with all sects and classes to restore Ireland to its primitive independence; which if accomplished (and that it can be supposed for a moment such a change would serve this country), who would profit by it so much as the Catholics, who are the great majority of its population? And yet a Roman Catholic, with the knowledge of these gentlemen's virtues, and their sufferings chiefly borne to remove his shackles, can be found to slander and defame, in the overflowings of his rancorous loyalty, the last precious saving of the wrecks of two Irish families, whose patriotism and misfortunes shall be recounted in Ireland by generations yet unborn.

When we contemplate this foul and unmanly attack

on this lady, and while we remember so cruel and unprovoked an attempt to infuse the last drop of bitterness in the waters of affliction, let us not forget that it is Jemmy Farrell, the Catholic brewer, who has done the evil.

The father of Mrs. Bond had two brothers settled in Ireland. Mr. John Jackson, of Creeve, in the county Monaghan, was a brother of the iron-founder of that name of Dublin, Henry Jackson, one of the most active and by all accounts the most upright and unswerving of the Dublin leaders. Another brother, Mr. Hugh Jackson, resided at Cremorne in the county of Monaghan. One of the daughters of Hugh Jackson married Mr. William Tennent of Belfast, an eminent merchant of that town, who was one of the state prisoners in Fort George. This lady died soon after her marriage at the house of Mrs. Bond in Dublin. She left an only daughter, Letitia Tennent—a young lady of rare qualities of heart and mind, in whom intellectual endowments of a high order and strong feelings of nationality seem to be hereditary possessions—who married Mr. James Emerson, the son of a respectable manufacturer of Belfast.[1]

[1] In "The Belfast Historical Collections," p. 459, we find the following notice of one of Colonel Barber's military exploits in Belfast: "Another dreadful plot.—Yesterday, Colonel Barber, attended by a strong guard, surrounded Union-street. A cotton factory of Mr. Emerson's appeared to be their principal object; however, the houses, gardens, and dunghills of some other in-

William Tennent, eldest son of the Rev. John Tennent of Roseyards, near Derbock, county Antrim; born in 1760; was early engaged in mercantile business, and acquired considerable property. His brother John having presided at a very important meeting of the northern leaders in Belfast, in May, 1797, when the question of immediate insurrection was discussed, an informer denounced the chairman as Mr. Tennent, and John Tennent having already taken his departure from Belfast, William Tennent was arrested on this denunciation, though his identity with the chairman was clearly disproved, and he suffered an imprisonment for five years. He was a prisoner in Fort George when his brother Robert returned to Ireland, and it was chiefly owing to the exertions of Dr. Tennent that his liberation was effected in 1802.

The wife of Henry Jackson died in Baltimore the 12th August, 1805. This lady was a sister of Foliot Magrath, a respectable citizen of Dublin.

Mrs. Bond, the daughter of Henry Jackson, died in Baltimore the 15th of September, 1843, in the house built in that city by her father. She was buried in the cemetery of the Independent church at Ferry Bar, Spring Gardens, near Bal-

habitants did not escape without being searched; but after a laborious attack they evacuated the place without carrying off any trophies."

timore. Mrs. Bond died of a disease attended with great bodily sufferings (cancer of the stomach), which she bore with extraordinary fortitude and resignation. She was attended in her last illness by her favourite and eldest daughter, Miss Eliza Bond.[1] The sterling qualities of this woman of great virtues, vigorous mind, and Christian principles, have been spoken of in terms of simple truth and unaffected admiration by one well capable of appreciating such gifts and graces, in a recent letter of Lady Letitia Emerson Tennent to Miss M'Cracken of Belfast, in reply to some inquiries of mine respecting Mrs. Bond, made at my request to that lady, the daughter of Mr. Tennent. From that communication I venture to make the following extracts:

Warwick-square, London, 26th October.

My dear Miss M'Cracken—A dear friend of mine who knew Mrs. Bond most intimately, and who esteemed and loved her with all her heart—though unfortunately she cannot tell much in relation to the inquiries of Mr. Madden—suggests that Mr. M. should write to Mr. Oliver Bond of Derry, nephew to the late Oliver Bond, who could give every information on the subject.

. . . . . .

I trust ere I close this letter I may hear from my cousin Washington Jackson, who was also a relative of Mrs. Oliver Bond, and who I think will be able to give us full information, as he lived for a long period of his

[1] For the above-mentioned data I am indebted to Mrs. Bond's nephew, Mr. Henry Jackson.—R. R. M.

life in America. I feel that I should myself be able to answer your queries, for when I was a girl I had the privilege of passing a month with dear Mrs. Bond when she came over to Ireland for the health of her daughter Eliza, and was then residing at Buncrana. She had been greatly attached to my mother, and for her sake gave me a large portion of her affection, and after her return to America corresponded with me regularly till her death. Still I did not often hear her speak of her sons. She was devotedly attached to her invalid daughter, who was a most superior person, and who died only a few years ago. Mrs. Ellicott, her second daughter, visited this country about sixteen years ago, and I saw her frequently, and I shall never forget the impression she made on me, which was that she was one of the cleverest women I have ever met, and most agreeable. Her mind was highly cultivated, and in every way she seemed worthy of being the daughter of dear Mrs. Bond, who was a woman in a thousand, and whose equal in ability I have rarely met. I only wish I had known her later in my life, when I could better have appreciated her rare qualities, and when I might have learned from her many particulars of her strange and eventful life. But to me she never spoke of her husband—it seemed too sacred a subject—and I was too young to ask her any questions, though often I wished to do so.

I assure you, dear Miss M'Cracken, it quite pleased me to see your familiar name in a letter to me, for though we have not met since the old, old days, when your name was a household word in my family, still I have very often thought of you, and inquired for you, and have talked about you to my children, telling them

of your beautiful daily life and your Christian character. . . .

I hasten to send you the information I have just received from Mr. Jackson [1] on the subject you wrote to me about. He writes: "Oliver Bond of Dublin had two sons in America. Henry Bond, the eldest, lived at Tallahassee, Florida; but I think he died some years since. Thomas J. Bond resides in New Orleans, where I think a letter would find him. Mrs. Ellicott's address would be—Mrs. Evan T. Ellicott, Baltimore, Maryland."

With kindest wishes, dear Miss M'Cracken, faithfully yours,

L. E. T.

NOTICE OF JOHN SWEETMAN—HIS NARRATIVE OF THE REMOVAL OF THE STATE PRISONERS TO FORT GEORGE, IN SCOTLAND—HIS ACCOUNT OF THE DEPLORABLE STATE OF NEILSON.

I avail myself of the account of the removal of the state prisoners to Fort George, which I find in the diary of John Sweetman, and the particular details into which it enters with respect to Neilson's unfortunate condition on board the transport in which he had been embarked in Dublin, as furnishing the most authentic information on these subjects:

[1] The gentleman above referred to, Mr. Henry Jackson of Linden Tower, near Stillorgan, county Dublin, is a nephew of Mrs. Bond. He resided many years in America, and I believe resided with Henry Jackson's family in Baltimore at the time of Mrs. Bond's death.—R. R. M.

We sailed (on the 19th March, 1799) with the wind pretty fair, but in the night it came to blow hard, and the vessel heaved terribly. Most of us were sick, and so continued the whole of Wednesday. The weather was rough and cold; our course for Belfast, there to take in more prisoners. From thence to sail for Greenock. After landing to be conveyed to Dumbarton. This is the first information of any consistency which we received as to the place of our destination. Continued our course northward with middling wind. Thursday morning near the Mourne mountains, with Carlingford Bay in view; the "Townsend's" boat comes alongside, with orders to stand in, and moor a small distance astern of her. The day being fine, and wishing to take the air on deck after the sea sickness, we are told by the sentries that two only are permitted to walk the main deck at a time, for a foot we were never suffered to put on the quarter-deck. In consequence of this order we sent a note to Captain Ewing, commanding officer, requesting he would give orders that four of us should be permitted up at a time, which he consents to. Spent the day one way and the other, and prepared for turning in about ten, when Samuel Neilson broke out into a fit of delirium. He darted from his bed, and ran round the hold, in search of robbers who had plundered his house; his manner, looks, and conversation evince delirium. It is difficult to restrain him from going upon deck. It is thought advisable to inform the commanding officer of his situation; Macneven goes up to bring him down to see his situation; a young officer comes to the hatchway, but will not come down, alleging that he can do no good. He has the ladder taken away. I

propose a watch, and take the first two hours; Sweeny gets up to assist me to keep him in bed. He rises several times, and acquires strength with the increase of his disorder.

He continues speaking, raving, and starting, in the most frightful manner during our watch; the prisoners cannot sleep, and the hold is in a state of the greatest confusion.

Thomas Russell is called, being the next on the watch. He reported next morning, Saturday, as did those who succeeded him, that Neilson continued as first stated, raving, starting, and using strong efforts to get up. About half-past nine we were all alarmed by a fit which seized him, being the second since his coming on board. This fit was not so violent as the former. Feeling the dreadful effects of Neilson's situation, we agreed that a representation should be made of his case to government, declaring that his life was in danger; and Macneven, as a medical man, was instructed to write a letter to Lord ———— on the subject, which Captain Ewing having read consented to send it, but said he had no hopes of its being effectual. He remarked that a few lines, which threw the responsibility on government, after warning them of the consequences, might be better omitted; but no alteration was made. The letter desired that he might be landed at Belfast.

March 24. The wind coming about, the convoy makes a signal of sailing. At two o'clock we weighed, and turned out of the bay of Carlingford. A slight breeze from the south-west during the night; but early in the morning a brisk gale got up, which enabled us to reach the Lough of Belfast about eight o'clock in

the morning. Easter Sunday.—At nine the convoy came to an anchor in White House Road, and in half an hour we were moored there. Immediately after, a very heavy gale came on with a breaking sea, which continued the whole day, with rain. Two of the soldiers stayed up all night with Neilson. He passed the night pretty well; but in the morning he had a most violent fit, which continued from eight until ten. It is not possible to describe his situation or ours. We were often of opinion he would breathe his last before night. Macneven wrote to the commanding officer of Belfast about Neilson's case, and desiring that he would have him landed.

Monday morning, 25th March. The convoy's boat came alongside and took in the two lieutenants and the steward, to whom Captain Ewing gave our letters to put in the post-office, having first read them. At half-past two a boat from the tender came alongside, with Dr. Dickson, Robert Simms, William Tennent, and Robert Hunter—the doctor from on board the tender, and the other three from the prevot prison, except Tennent, who had been suffered to remain at his own house, on account of a broken leg, which happened to him on board the tender in October last. We all dined about 4 o'clock. Neilson became more tranquil and contented. This day was extremely fine, and the lough perfectly smooth.

Tuesday morning at 4 o'clock, weighed anchor for Greenock; the wind pretty fair. A heavy gale came on between six and seven, during which the ship required the entire force of the crew to manage her. One of the soldiers happened to be an old sailor on the Scotch coast, and was highly serviceable. He stood at the

helm, and made the Rock of Ailsa about seven. The gale increased to a rank storm. We went between ten and eleven knots an hour; the gunwale and three streaks of deck under water. The sea broke clear over us, and poured into the hold; several of the berths were drenched with water. Mine was completely flooded by the bilge water, which came up between the timbers and through the ceiling. All the trunks were knocked about, and most of the crockery broken. The hold exhibited a most confused scene. It was impossible to keep one's feet, or find a dry spot; this storm continuing till near eleven, when we got into the Frith of Clyde. We were now in a heavy gale of wind, and had as fine a sail as could be, till we got within sight of the lighthouse going up to Greenock; the wind slackened and became contrary, and after a few tacks we anchored astern of the convoy, within a mile and a half of the lighthouse.

Neilson continues the same way, and our party again pluck up their spirits. The next day, Wednesday, the 27th, weighed and began to tack, the wind being adverse. We continued at this work the whole day, and made by computation about one mile and a half; we again anchored within the light. The days were very fine, and the views on each side were romantic and beautiful.—Neilson is something better.

Thursday, March 28th. Weighed and commenced tacking; the wind being more favourable we made a better hand of it. At half-past three, in making the larboard tack, the ship missed stays; she continued driving ashore under a heavy gale of wind, and with the very utmost difficulty answered helm in time to prevent her going on shore. We were at one time within 150 feet

of the shore, and every hand on board was certain she must go ashore. The mate said nothing could save her. Though present at the time I really viewed it without any emotion. The commanding officer ordered us all under hatches just as she was clawing off. We continued tacking till late in the evening, it blowing a storm, and then anchored, as we perceived in the morning, about a mile and a half from Greenock. This was indeed a dreadful night, perhaps more so than any person on board had experienced.

About half-past six o'clock, Captain Ewing sent for me, and informed me that he had received a letter from the officer on shore, that four coaches were arrived from Edinburgh to convey us to Fort George under escort of a troop of horse, which were expected to arrive at Greenock to-night; that three messengers had come down from London to attend us; one of them, Mr. Scott, had requested that we should arrange the sets of persons which should occupy each carriage; that each person would be allowed to carry a portmanteau.

Saturday, March 30th. A boat came alongside the ship to order her down to Greenock, which being done we were landed in boats with our baggage.

We were received on shore by the messengers, Scott, Sylvester, and ——— ; a large party of the North York Militia being drawn up. We were then put into carriages, five in each. I was in No. 2, with Joseph Cormick, Cuthbert, Hudson, and Chambers.

We then were conveyed to Greenock, where we dined, the magistrates and guards attending. It being too late to proceed on, slept in the large room we dined in, the town-hall, at the White Hart, M'Kinacky's—the guards

attending all night, with two officers, Major Hay, aid-de-camp to Abercrombie, one of them. The officers behaved with much politeness, as did the messengers. We gave up all our money to Scott, by order; mine was in my purse—seventeen guineas. The people of Greenock crowded in great numbers to see us. It was hard to form any opinion of the sentiments of the people; we were perfectly convinced that all the upper order in the town are highly aristocratical. A Mr. M'Loughlin, a merchant of the town, of the house of Daniel and John M'Loughlin, made himself known to me—mentioned his connection with Cornelius M'Loughlin and the Dodds. He very kindly squeezed my hand, but took an opportunity of doing it when there was no one present—otherwise he assured me it would be injurious to him; and, further, that he ran considerable risk in conversing with me. M'Loughlin is an officer in the town volunteers, or he could not get into the room where we were.

Sunday. Got up at half-past five; dressed and in the coaches about half-past six. Proceeded to Bishopton inn, ten miles from Greenock and twelve from Glasgow. The road was for the most part along the Clyde. Passed near Paisley, from thence to Glasgow, but did not go through the city, only that part of the suburbs which lay on the right bank of the Clyde. We were met here by a great number of people who, by their looks, we conceived to be friends. They came over the bridge and along the river in great numbers. The carriages drove furiously through the part of the town we passed through. Passed through Rutherglen, three miles from Glasgow, where we observed the people equally

favourable. Next proceeded to Hamilton, where we arrived at half-past three.

The remainder of the narrative is descriptive of the country through which they passed on their way to Fort George, where they arrived on the 14th of April, 1799.

Dickson in his narrative gives an account of the arrival of the vessel from Dublin with the state prisoners, in the lough, about two miles from Belfast, where the northern leaders who like himself were destined for banishment were embarked, the Messrs. Simms, Tennent, and Hunter. From Greenock to Fort Royal their journey overland was rendered as agreeable to them by their custodians—and to the honour of Scotland be it said, by all they came in contact with, whether military people or civilians—as the nature of their unhappy circumstances admitted of its being made:

We could not banish (says Dickson) the recollection of the prisons in our native country, under the control of our countrymen, and regulated by the mandates of an Irish minister or his executioners. The severities and sufferings in Kilmainham and Newgate pressed upon the memory, and harrowed up the feelings of some; while others shuddered at the recollection of the noise and nastiness of a Belfast black-hole; the privations, alarms, and stench of its prevot prison; and the horrors of a floating Bastile, in which their lives had been twice endangered, by the extremes of heat and cold, in the

short space of eight months. The change in our situation and treatment was so great and so pleasing that sometimes I could not restrain my imagination from playing with the thought that I had been transported not only to a new heaven and a new earth, but to the society of spirits more perfect than those by which I had been haunted for months before.

On Tuesday, April 9th, we arrived at Fort George. Our entrance might be called solemn. The very aspect of the place made it so to me, who had never before seen a regular fortification. A numerous guard was drawn out, and the multitude assembled—which included great part of the rank and fashion of the country—was so numerous that persons unacquainted with the improved state of the northern counties of Scotland, and consequently increased numbers of its inhabitants, might have supposed that one-half of their population was collected on the occasion. Through them and the guards our coaches drove to a stair, up which we were conducted to the rampart, and thence along a wooden bridge, thrown across the street on our account, to the third floor of the garrison, and shown into a spacious room, where we found an uncommonly large grate filled with a blazing coal fire.

We had not enjoyed this many minutes, when Lieutenant Colonel Stuart (the lieutenant-governor), the fort-major, and some other officers, made their appearance. Panting as we were with anxiety to know our fates, their minds did not seem to be much more at ease than ours. After a few polite inquiries concerning our journey, health, accommodations, &c. &c., the lieutenant-governor taking a paper from his pocket said:

"Gentlemen, it is necessary that I should read to you the orders which I have received from government; though, I assure you, to me a very painful task." That he felt it such was evident from the tremulous voice and interrupted breath with which he performed it. On perceiving the indignation which these orders excited, expressed by every countenance, and hearing it from one tongue; "Gentlemen," said he, "as a servant of government I cannot hear reflections on government. I own I cannot reconcile your appearance and these orders—yet I must obey them. However, it shall be your own fault if ever they are executed with severity." On this, he and the other gentlemen retired seemingly, and as I believe really, affected with our situation.[1]

Soon after, our table was handsomely laid out and a good dinner of five dishes served up. We had two servants to attend us. Our allowance of drink was one dozen of porter, one of ale, and ten bottles of port. And we were informed that we might have tea in the evening, or a cold supper with a bottle of porter or ale for each, as we should choose.

After dinner, twenty rooms, between sixteen and eighteen feet square each, were allotted us by ballot, sixteen of which were laid with brick over the boarden floor. On taking possession we found them clean, dry, airy, well plastered and ceiled, with windows sufficiently large, well glazed and secured on the outside with iron bars. In each room was a neat four-posted bed with good curtains, palliasse, mattress, sheets, one under and

[1] "How different this from the conduct of our own petty upstarts during the preceding years. I am sorry I cannot produce a copy of these *original* instructions. I had such, but somehow or other it has fallen aside."

three upper blankets, a cotton coverlet, bolster, pillow, a rush-bottomed chair, and small oaken table; a bottle and basin, a commode, fire-irons, coal-box, candlestick, snuffers and extinguisher—all entirely new and good in their kind. To these was afterwards added a bell on the outside of each door, with two pulls on the inside, one at the fire-place, and one at the bed, that in case of sickness, fire, or alarm, our keepers might be roused, and assistance procured. Four invalids were exempted from duty, for our service, and allowed double pay; two to make our beds, keep our rooms clean, and do other chamber and personal services; and the other two to keep our knives, forks, spoons, &c., as they ought to be, bring our provisions from the inn, and attend us at table. Each of us had captain's allowance of coal and candle, nor did we burn a dipped candle except for one fortnight during my residence in the fort. For our health equal provision was made. The surgeon of the fort had instructions to attend us, and supply us with medicine when necessary, which he regularly did. In one instance of dangerous illness, a physician was called from the distance of sixty miles, and liberally paid by government. Were I here to pass unnoticed the attentions of the Rev. Mr. Stulker, chaplain of the fort, I should think myself unpardonable, as they were equally kind and unremitting.

The preceding statement I have made with the most scrupulous exactness, and publish with great pleasure, as a tribute justly due to the British ministry and the servants of the crown with whom we were placed. In any circumstances such attention and liberality would have done them honour; but with such representations

and instructions from Ireland as gave rise to the orders transmitted to Fort George, under which our confinement was not only almost uninterrupted and solitary, but such as nearly precluded conversation even during the few hours that our doors were unlocked, their conduct was more than honourable, and shall ever command my warmest praise. Nay, when I contrast it with what I knew, witnessed, and felt, during the preceding year, in what was "my country"—but now is, or yet may be, I know not what, through the intrigues of an apostate and the enormities of a faction, into whose hands God in his displeasure seems to have delivered it—I feel praise too cool for their merits, and language too feeble for the expression of my sensations.

On the morning after our arrival we were visited by the king's messengers, who, according to promise, returned to each of us the money given them at Greenock, or faithfully accounted for it. Major Hay also called on us before he left the fort. After some conversation he asked me, as I believe he did the other prisoners, my name, my profession, the former place of my residence, my age, and the number of my family; the answers to all which questions he wrote in his pocket-book. On my asking the reason of this particularity, he told me that "from our appearance and conduct, and the orders sent to the governor, he was convinced that we had been grossly misrepresented to the British government; that he wished, as far as he could, to do away such misrepresentations; and that, on his arrival in London, he would state what he had seen, and what he thought, respecting us to his majesty's ministers." This, I have every reason to believe, he did with feeling and with faithfulness.

For some time after this our situation was variable and fluctuating. Our first ten days gave us the fullest conviction that our governor, in the discharge of his duty, meant to act with a lenient hand. But whether from new Irish mandates to the Duke of Portland, or from whatever cause unknown to us, he was obliged to change his measures.

April 18th. Till this date, we were permitted to walk on the ramparts during the greater part of the day, ten at a time, in two enclosures, five in each, and attended by sentinels. These were placed, two in each enclosure, and one in a very small intermediate space, to prevent our passing backward and forward. These enclosures were sufficiently large for every purpose of air and exercise, and so situated, that from the banquette we were entertained with a widely extended scenery, as variegated, wildly great, and rudely picturesque, as water, moor, mountain, cultivated fields, one large, handsome town, several villages, a few gentlemen's seats, some good farm-houses, thriving plantations of great extent, Culloden with all its recollections, a considerable succession of trading and other vessels, a constant paddling of ferry and fishing-boats, and a long and lofty ridge of the Scottish Alps at a distance, exposing their bare heads and naked shoulders to the pitiless storms, could present to an eye accustomed to tame and temperate regions. Of the salubrity and comparative mildness of the air nothing need be said, when it is known that the fort stands upon a dry, gravelly soil, and is two-thirds surrounded by the sea, which at high water washes its walls, in circumference more than a mile.

April 23rd. Notice was given us by Major Bailie

that government allowance rendered retrenchment necessary, which accordingly took place: viz., from ten to eight bottles of wine at and after dinner.

April 26th. Hitherto we were indulged in writing to our friends, without any other restriction than sending our letters to the governor unsealed. As this exposed him to daily attention, of which his situation would not admit, he sent us a note to-day, of which the following is a copy:

"Fort George, 26th April, 1799.

"Lieutenant-Governor Stuart requests the state prisoners may send their letters to him once in the week—on Saturday; and that they will abstain from all allusions to politics, or the measures of government, in their correspondence.

"STUART, LIEUT.-GOV."

April 29th. Information was given us that our allowance was farther reduced; that it was insufficient for our support on the existing arrangement; and therefore, that besides other articles we must purchase our own drink, which was not to exceed a pint of wine and the same of porter for each man. Spirits, as from the beginning, totally prohibited.

May 6th. Instructions arrived—the following extract from them the governor sent us:

"Lieutenant-Governor Stuart encloses herewith an extract from instructions he has just received from the Duke of Portland, by his majesty's command. It is needless for the lieutenant-governor to observe that he must fulfil the instructions correctly. The prisoners will in consequence withdraw to their several apartments. They will assemble to breakfast at nine in the morning,

by ten in number. An hour will be allowed for breakfast, when the other half of the prisoners will assemble —an officer, or keeper, and a sentinel, being in the room. They will assemble in like manner at two o'clock and at four. The wine will be equally divided. An hour, or if the prisoners choose, an hour and a half, will be allowed for dinner. As they cannot assemble in the evening, such of the prisoners as choose will order tea or bread and cheese to their own apartments. The lieutenant-governor has ordered Mr. Mackay, superintendent of state prisoners, to call on each of the prisoners in his own apartment, for the money they may have, which the lieutenant-governor learned from the king's messengers amounted to £———. The prisoners will mark each sum themselves opposite their names, and the lieutenant-governor has put his receipt at the bottom of the paper. The prisoners will observe, all their letters must be sent to the Duke of Portland. 'The Star' and 'Sun' newspapers will be sent to such prisoners as choose to order them, and books as formerly. The prisoners can only air two at a time, which they may continue to do from nine in the morning till eight in the evening.

"STUART, LIEUT.-GOV."

These instructions afford a strong presumption that everything painful in our confinement originates in Ireland; and that we owe all that is comfortable exclusively to the British minister and our worthy governor.

May 7th. Locked up yesterday evening, agreeable to orders. Visited this morning at eight; locked up till nine, when we were conducted to breakfast; after

breakfast put under lock till about twelve, when, to our astonishment, we were informed that we might walk, ten and ten, as usual—*i. e.*, five in each inclosure, and continue to do so till six in the evening.

This indulgence, as I afterwards learned from Dr. Roy, surgeon of the garrison, we owed entirely to the governor, whose humanity conferred it, at the risk of ministerial rebuke, perhaps dismissal.

Until the receipt of the last orders, we were permitted on Sunday mornings to have prayers in our mess-room, to which our keepers, attendants, and the soldiers on guard, paid particular attention.

May 10th. This day brought new orders, which were communicated in the following note:

"Fort George, 10th May, 1799.

"The prisoners are to be locked up at all times, except when at meals or airing; they will be permitted to air as follows: at ten in the morning, ten prisoners will go out in two divisions, as usual, and may remain until one o'clock, when the other ten may go out, and remain till four o'clock, after which the prisoners are not to be permitted to go out. This allows three hours for air and exercise to each man; they must mess in two divisions, as formerly directed; and it being impossible to serve each prisoner in his own apartment, one choosing one thing and one another, they will please to agree among themselves whether they will have tea or bread and cheese, &c.; and they will be permitted to assemble in two divisions, as at dinner, from seven to half-past eight, when they must retire to their apartments. STUART, LIEUT.-GOV.

"N.B. To be copied by Mr. Mackay."

May 12th. Sent a message to the lieutenant-governor, requesting a renewal of our permission to assemble for prayer on Sunday mornings, with the additional liberty for me to preach to my fellow-prisoners. His answer was that "he would be happy in granting every possible indulgence, but was sorry his orders obliged him to refuse the liberty requested, at present."

May 12th, 1800. From the last date until this day nothing of great importance to us occurred, as coming from the Irish government. During this time, however, our good governor had been gradually procuring indulgences for us. Several restrictions were totally removed, and the others greatly relaxed, on his unsolicited representations to the Duke of Portland. Not satisfied with this, he solicited and obtained for us additional privileges and comforts, of which the following exhibits an instance:

"Fort George, 12th May, 1800.

"Lieutenant-Governor Stuart, having stated to the Duke of Portland that he did not apprehend any inconvenience or risk could arise from the state prisoners having permission to bathe in the sea, under certain restrictions, his grace has thought proper to grant that indulgence. Such gentlemen, therefore, as wish to avail themselves of that permission, will give in their names to Sergeant Fletcher; and they will mention any three days in the week (which days must continue unchanged) as will best suit them, as also the hour in the morning at which they would wish to bathe, as they must all bathe at the same time. The lieutenant-governor hopes they will choose some hour before nine o'clock. Orders

will be given to the guards accordingly; the place for bathing is on the north side of the Fort.

"STUART, LIEUT.-GOV.

"To the state prisoners."

On reading this note, equally marked with humanity and politeness, the Dublin prisoners could not help making some comparisons between the author and what they called the "upstart peerling, hireling clerks, and petulant coxcombs," by whom they had been insulted and otherwise ill-treated. One of them put an end to these comparisons by drily remarking, that nothing need be said on the subject but that "the governor [1] was a gentleman by birth, education, and habits."

May 28th. The governor told me the other day that he would have the privilege of bathing extended to every day except Sunday; and declared that the propriety of our conduct commanded his esteem and deserved his patronage. Even now our restraints are nearly done away. We have liberty of all each other's apartments, and may amuse ourselves as we please, within the bounds prescribed, from eight in the morning till nearly nine in the evening.

For nearly two years, as must appear from what I have written, our situation has been becoming gradually less comfortless, through the persevering good offices of our revered governor and the indulgence of the Duke of Portland, since permitted to follow the dictates of his own mind. During the latter part of that time, we have enjoyed every accommodation and every means

[1] Lieutenant-Governor Stuart, brother to the Earl of Murray, with whose family and connections every one who has read the History of Scotland must be acquainted.

of health and comfort which that situation could admit; nor have we laboured under a single restraint which safe custody did not require.

During the remainder of my stay at Fort George, though nothing materially affecting our external condition took place, a correspondence with men both in and under power was instituted and carried on, in the course of which our minds, according to their various temperaments, were elevated, depressed, amused, provoked, or terrified.

On looking over my journal, one occurrence presents itself which I cannot refrain transcribing. As some of our rooms smoked, the governor caused tall wooden tubes to be erected on the tops of our chimneys, soon after our arrival. These continued to be of great service to us, till the night between the 13th and 14th of March, 1801. About midnight we were roused by an alarm of fire. A flame from an adjoining funnel had caught the tops of the tubes on our chimneys, and spread rapidly towards the great powder magazine, which was within fifty feet of us. The moment the alarm reached him, he rushed to our ward—ran to Emmet's apartment first, to remove his apprehensions for himself and family, and then to every one of us, assuring us that there was no danger, as the magazine was proof against fire from without.

The fire being extinguished, we retired to rest. In the morning, while at breakfast, we were honoured with a note, which concluded thus:

"I shall, however, order some masonry to be put on the top of those vents which smoke most, to remedy as far as can be done with safety that inconvenience. But,

as the weather will not now admit anything to be done on the chimney-tops, I have to request that the gentlemen will be particularly attentive to their fires at bed-time, though I do not think the fire of last night originated from any of the prison vents.

"I have the honour to be your obedient servant,

"J. STUART, LIEUT.-GOV.

"To the state prisoners."

The above was accompanied by the following:

"The lieut.-governor's compliments to Mr. Emmet. He hopes Mrs. Emmet suffered no inconvenience from the alarm of fire which was given last night. As the idea of being locked in may occasion a disagreeable sensation to a lady's mind, in case of any sudden occurrence (though the lieut.-governor flatters himself none will in future arise) he will give directions that the passage door leading to Mr. Emmet's apartments shall not in future be locked, being convinced Mr. Emmet would make no improper use of all the doors being left open.

"Thomas A. Emmet, Esq."

Blush! blush! Irish clerks, sheriffs, judges, hangmen, blush! ! !

November 10th. A letter to Emmet from the Lord Chief Justice of Scotland, his early friend and fellow-student, informed him that "all his applications were fruitless and his expectations vain, notwithstanding his warmest interference in his favour."

The official declaration from London "that no exceptions would take place, nor any liberations during the war"; and the demi-official information from Dublin,

received December 9th, "that the term of our imprisonment and exile was to be prolonged," were effectually refuted on the evening of the next day, December 10th, by the arrival of our old friend, Sylvester, to carry off five—the identical five who were not implicated in the Dublin compact.

As his arrival was late we had little conversation with him till next day, when he informed us of the following particulars, some of which seem difficult to account for:

That, by his first instructions, he was enjoined to take us under a military escort from Fort George to Greenock; and that, on his remonstrance, this injunction was modified into an order to the Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, and another to the Lieut.-Governor of Fort George, to grant him such, if by him required.

That a cutter had been dispatched from Portsmouth or Plymouth to the Irish station off Cork, with orders for a sloop of war to proceed to Greenock for our reception and conveyance to Ireland.

That, notwithstanding all these precautions and all the trouble and expense attending them, we were to be franked home; and that our accommodations and entertainment during our journey and voyage were entirely left to his discretion.

Such was the kindness of this man that, before he called on us on the day after his arrival, he waited on the governor, gave him a receipt for our bodies, and took us under his own care. Having done this he told us, that until he should be informed of the sloop's arrival we should be at liberty to visit the neighbouring towns, or make excursions to such parts of the country as we might choose and the weather admit. Of this humane

and generous indulgence we availed ourselves as much as possible, sometimes in his company, and sometimes with one of our former guardians, for twenty days, equally to our amusement and the advantage of our health and spirits.

December 30. Informed us of the arrival of the "Hazard" sloop of war, Captain Butterfield, at Greenock. As the ship was in waiting, it was resolved to take the road round the whole northern shore, though it extended our journey to 328 miles.

As the shortness of the day obliged us generally to travel after dark, we had few visitants at the places where we slept. One, however, we had which presented two such traits of the character of Scottish gentlemen that I cannot pass it unrecorded. In the town of Brechin, about seventy miles N.E. of Edinburgh, we were waited on soon after our dinner by a deputation from a numerous party then in the inn, requesting the pleasure of our company during the evening. This we declined, through delicacy to Mr. Sylvester.

January 9th, 1802.—In the evening we reached Greenock, in good spirits and perfect safety; and next day, at noon, were carried aboard the "Hazard" by Captain Butterfield, by whom we were politely treated and hospitably entertained till the evening of the 12th, when after a pleasant passage he landed us near Hollywood, and escorted us to the house of Sir James Bristow, who received us with great civility, and accommodated us with carriages for ourselves and luggage to Belfast. On our arrival about nine o'clock, we were waited on by the sovereign of the town and the town-major, who seemed to think that we were to become their

wards, at least till we should enter into recognizance. Mr. Sylvester thought otherwise; and as the room was soon crowded with our friends and relatives, he seemed overpowered with the tenderness of the scene, and requested we might hasten to the embrace of our families, who must be expecting us with throbbing hearts; adding, "Gentlemen, I'll expect the pleasure of your company here to breakfast, at ten o'clock." Then turning to the sovereign and Major Fox, he told them that he would be glad to see them next day at any hour convenient to them, that bail, if thought necessary, might be taken and his wards liberated. We retired, and on the succeeding morning returned to our friend. The magistrates attended about eleven o'clock; our recognizance was taken, and we, William Tennent, Robert Simms, Robert Hunter, William Dowdall, and William Steele Dickson, were once more restored to the liberty of breathing the air and treading the soil of our native land—which we had left less than three years before an independent kingdom, with a national legislature and a rising trade; but found a dependent province, and its five millions of inhabitants sold at their own expense to a foreign government, by a parricidal combination of weak and wicked miscreants, to whom, under the name of representatives, she had entrusted the guardianship of the rights, fortunes, liberty, and lives of her people.[1]

[1]Dickson's Narrative, pp. 126, &c.

MEMOIR OF
HENRY AND JOHN SHEARES

CHAPTER I

THE SHEARES FAMILY

THE earliest notice in Irish records of a person of this name, is to be found in "The Cork Remembrancer," by Edwards, 1794, where the following mention is made in the list of mayors:

1554. W. Shears (*sic*), Mayor of Youghal. The 28th of March, 1670—a license of this date exists in the bishop's registry, Cork, for the marriage of Humphrey Sheares of Carrigtoghill (between Cork and Youghal) with Anne Sheares of same place.

In 1680, the will of this Humphrey Sheares was proved at Cloyne. Therein he styles himself "of Woodstock, in the parish of *Carrigtwohill,*" and mentions the orphans of his wife's first husband; his son-in-law, John Love, a shoemaker in Castlemartyr; he names also his youngest daughter, Rebecca.

In 1679, a son of the preceding Humphrey, Christopher Sheares, entered Trinity College,

Dublin, aged 20, and is described as born in the county of Cork.

In 1693, this Christopher was made prebendary of Killassagenullane. He was brother of Humphrey Sheares, apothecary, who made several considerable purchases from the trustees of the forfeited estates in 1703, and who married, in 1673, Elizabeth Plasteed of Cork, and was father of Thomas Sheares.

In 1716, the last-named Thomas Sheares was sheriff of the city of Cork. On his death the lands purchased by his father passed to the family of the above-named Rev. Christopher Sheares, who also is said to have acquired estates. He left a son, Henry Sheares, Esq., of Goldenbush, in the county of Cork, who married, in 1717, Mary, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of John Bayley of Castlemore, mentioned in Smith's History of the County of Cork, vol. i. p. 207. The estates of Mr. Bayley passed to his eldest daughter, Mrs. Rye; and Mrs. Sheares received for her portion £1,000.

4th September, 1703. Humphrey Sheares, the brother of Christopher, made a settlement of estates, which he had just purchased, on himself for life; then on his only son and heir, Thomas, and his male descendants; and then on his brother Christopher, the clergyman, and his male descendants; then on Charles Newman of Cork, Gent., and his male descendants; then on the

heirs of the body of his son Thomas; then on the daughter of Christopher Sheares; on Richard Sheares and Mary Love and their issue; and in default of all such, the rents to be paid amongst ten persons who should be poor and of the nearest akin to said Humphrey.

In 1726, Henry Sheares, Esq., of Goldenbush (thus designated), executed a deed carrying into effect certain articles made in 1717, on his marriage with Mary Bayley, by which he bound himself to settle the estates (which comprise only those derived from his uncle Humphrey), reserving a power to grant a fee-farm lease of one moiety of Coolmuckey, and five other townlands in the barony of Musteens, to George Rye, Esq., at £100 per annum. The wife's jointure was fixed at £120 per annum.

It is to be observed, that although in the reports of the Record Commission it appears that Humphrey purchased the whole of the townlands, yet half of them only was for himself; he accepted a trust for Lieutenant-Colonel, afterwards Major-General Robert Stearne, of whom see more in Dean Davies' Diary.

By the marriage, in 1717, of Henry Sheares of Goldenbush with Miss Mary Bayley, Henry Sheares, the subsequent banker and member of the Irish parliament was the eldest son.

Smith says, in his History of the County of Cork, that Goldenbush was the seat of Mr. Hay;

but in 1761 it was certainly in the possession of Henry Sheares, the father of Henry and John, when he is described as "Henry Sheares, Esq., of Goldenbush, elected for the borough of Cloghnakilty."

Thus far I am indebted to my antiquarian friend, Mr. T——, of Cork, for these notices of and references to the early history of the Sheares family.

With regard to the preceding notice of the proprietor of Goldenbush in Smith's time, I have to observe that Smith brings down his History of Cork to the year 1773. His work was published in 1774. In vol. i., page referring to "Innishannon, pleasantly situated on the river Bandon, six miles from Kinsale," he says: "Next below Innishannon is Coolemoreen, lately improved by Mr. Hodder of Cork, &c. Below this is Golden Bush (Goldenbush), a good house of Mr. Hay's, pleasantly situated on the river."

It may be then inferred that in 1773 the Sheares had certainly ceased to live at Goldenbush, and that a Mr. Hay was residing there, though the property in that place may have continued then to belong to Henry Sheares.

The following references to members of the Sheares family I have taken from the Reports of the Irish Records Commissioners:

In the volume containing the 15th Report, published in 1825, p. 349, I find mention made

of Richard Sheares of Corke, gent., 24th May, 1703, in consideration of £2,669 10*s.* 9*d.*, having obtained various townlands of the forfeited estate of the late Earl of Clancarty—the town and lands of Coolemucky, Bullingully and Rathfelan, Iniskareen, Knockshanavoy, in the barony of Muskerry.

Again, in the same volume we find, at page 350, Humphry Sheares of Corke, apothecary, on the 15th of March, 1702, in consideration of £200 17*s.* 9*d.*, having obtained part of Hugarsland, on the north side of Bandon road, and some houses in Cross-street and on the Bandon road, formerly held under lease from Henry, Earl of Romney to James Walshe of Corke.

In the same vol., at p. 357, we find Humphry Sheares of Corke, apothecary, the 23rd of June, 1703, in consideration of £718, obtaining the lands of Knockrea, The Knappoges, in the south liberties of Corke, the estate of Ignatius Goold, or Arthur Galway, attainted.

In the same vol., p. 381, we find Humphry Sheares of Corke, apothecary, again, on 15th March, 1702, in consideration of £335, obtaining a dwelling-house and large premises (locality not described) in Corke, the estate of Ignatius Goold, or Arthur Galway, attainted.

Thus we find that the ancestors of the subjects of this memoir were English adventurers, who became speculators in forfeited estates; and, as

in numerous other instances, we must look into the records of deeds of sale and of grants to English adventurers of "the Pale," and of course members of the Established Church, for the ancestry of the principal leaders of the Society of United Irishmen.

Henry and John Sheares were born in Goldenbush. Their early years were passed at their father's country house at Glasheen, in the parish of Finbar, about one mile and a-half from the city of Cork. I visited this place in July, 1858. A large portion of the house, to the rere of the premises, was no longer standing; but the entire front part existed, though in a very dilapidated condition, and was tenanted by a farmer of the name of Blazeby. There was a considerable quantity of land attached to this place of residence of old Henry Sheares, and an income from a good deal of it is still received by the daughter of Henry Sheares, jun., the widow of Alderman Perry. Mr. Blazeby informed me that previously to his occupation it had been in the possession of the Jackson family, that it came into their possession prior to 1798, and that the late Judge Jackson was born in this house of Glasheen.

The banking business carried on by Henry Sheares, sen., in Cork, in conjunction with Dr. Rogers, is thus mentioned in the Dublin Directories from the year 1766 to 1777, in the list of

bankers of Cork: "Messrs. Rogers and Sheares, bankers of Corke, Hamon's Marsh."

I do not know whether this fact be known to persons of much antiquarian lore in Cork, who inform me that the banking house of Sheares and Rogers was in Paul-street, corner of Carey's-lane. In the Directory for the following year, 1778, the name of Sheares disappears from the firm.

Henry Sheares, sen., had a town house in Cork, which I lately visited, in Nile-street, the old-fashioned corner-house of Moore-street, No. 9, now a public house. The panelled walls of the staircase and of the drawing-room, and the handsomely decorated stuccoed ceilings of those rooms are evidences enough of the house having been formerly that of some person of distinction.

Henry and John Sheares, the subjects of this memoir, were the sons of Mr. Henry Sheares of Cork, whose memory, even at this day (by the few who take some interest in things not immediately connected with butter, salted pork, and beef), is held in the highest veneration in his native city. This gentleman, from 1761 to 1767, sat in the Irish parliament for the borough of Cloghnakilty.[1] He was a man of considerable learning and abilities; and whether as a political

[1] In Tuckey's "Cork Remembrancer," p. 326, I find the following record of Henry Sheares' first return to parliament: "27th November, 1761, Henry Sheares, Esq., of Golden Bush, *vice* Lord Boyle, returned for the county Cork."

Samuel Neilson

Editor of "The Northern Star." From an Engraving by T. W. Huffam after a Miniature by Byrne

writer, or as a literary essayist, his talents appear to have been of a high order.

His conduct in parliament in a session of memorable interest obtained for him the general respect of his countrymen. His literary essays, which he was in the habit of publishing in the Cork periodicals, from 1770 to 1776, chiefly under the signature of "Agricola," would do honour to any writer of the present day. One of these, an Essay on Forgiveness, some extracts from which will be found at the end of this chapter, exhibits the finest feelings of Christian benevolence, combined with literary talents highly cultivated.

At the expiration of eighty-six years, the humanity of Henry Sheares is still felt and appreciated in his native city. The Society for the Relief of Persons confined for Small Debts, was one of those institutions which owed its being to his benevolence; and a remnant of its endowment constitutes the capital of the Cork Charitable Loan Fund, which is still in existence.

The character of this most amiable man I find so fully, and I believe justly, set forth in one of the periodicals for the year 1776, the year of his decease, that such a memorial, I am sure, of one who was the Howard of his native place, cannot be unacceptable to the reader, or irrelevant to my subject. "The Hibernian Chronicle," printed in Cork by Mr. William Flynn, speaks in the fol-

lowing terms on the subject of Mr. Sheares' decease:

He is gone for ever from amongst us. I never held a pen on a more melancholy occasion; being neither able to remember his life and virtues without veneration, nor to mention his name but with tears. The city of Cork has had its chief ornament torn from it; his wife has lost the husband who adored her; his children—numerous and inexperienced—the wing that covered them; his friends, a gentleman of noble endowments and liberal affections; the whole community, a man from whose pen they derived both profit and pleasure, instruction and entertainment. As a husband, a father, a friend, and a citizen, he might be esteemed a most perfect model of imitation. No relation did he abuse, or was he capable of abusing. His life was not only free from faults that invite censure, but filled with actions that deserve praise. In him youth was a preparation for manhood—manhood for age, and age for immortality. In times that nearly touched the extreme of corruption or barbarity—at an age when licentiousness is scarcely deemed a vice, this enlightened character exhibited an uncommon example of assiduity in the cultivation of his talents; of moderation and refinement in the choice of his pleasures. Accordingly, the labours of his youth blossomed in the honours of his age. From parliament, where his distinguished abilities might have raised him to the highest posts of power or profit, he chose to retire with a moderate requital of his services—thinking the tumults of ambition, the disquietudes that attend, and the disappointments that cross it, to be well exchanged for the endearments of

love, the enjoyments of friendship, the discharge of humane and social duties—the pursuits of industry, and the nobler pleasures that result from the improvements of reason and the exercises of religion. In public he was honoured and admired; in private, respected and beloved. His understanding and virtues ensured him an esteem and authority which no station alone could command, no rank could procure. On the few whose hearts he had tried, he bestowed an unlimited confidence and affection. To the rest of mankind, particularly to those who needed it most, he imparted a share of the blessings which heaven had poured profusely upon him. He was always endeavouring to relieve the distresses of the indigent—to redress the injuries of the oppressed! The charitable institutions which do honour to the city of Cork, particularly the Society for the Relief of Persons imprisoned for Small Debts, are principally indebted to his inventive humanity for their rise, and to his activity for their countenance. He saw into the human heart, but with the meekness of a Christian—not the moroseness of a cynic. His contempt for the vices of the world did not extinguish his pity for their sufferings. When he wrote, instruction was incessantly flowing from his pen. To dissipate the clouds of vice, to check the wanderings of error, to enlighten the darkness of ignorance, to animate the slow, to refresh the faint, and to confirm the persevering in the tasks of virtue and benevolence, was the perpetual employment and delight of a mind intent on the glory and perfection of its species. For this he was eminently qualified—not less by the excellence of his heart than by the superiority of his understanding. The essays

with which he obliged the public through this paper bespoke him the generous friend of mankind, the steady asserter and advocate of virtue, the ingenious reasoner, and the liberal religionist. It would be presumption in me to decide on his merit compared with other writers of this class; yet, in my opinion, no moralist—not even Mr. Addison—has excelled him in this species of composition. I will not enter into a detail of his other excellent qualities. Let it be sufficient to say that he is now bringing to perfection that mind in heaven, which he cultivated for the honour of God, and the advantage of his fellow-creatures on earth.—A. A.

The remains of old Mr. Sheares, the banker and M.P., were interred in Cork, in the churchyard, it is said, of St. Nicholas;[1] and, little to the honour of his native city, no monument has been erected to his memory. But, if the good people of Cork would only remember that it is

[1] I have in vain twice searched the obituary registry of this church for an entry of the burial of old Henry Sheares. There is no such entry there. There is no such tomb now existing. The old church was demolished about twenty-five years ago, and none of the vaults of the old church remain. Other searches in the parish registries of Shandon's, Peter's, and Finbar's churches have been equally unsuccessful.

To inquiries on the same subject addressed to a gentleman well known for his antiquarian pursuits and labours, I have received the following reply:

"It is only a few days since Mr. Connolly, the rector, told me that he had search made about 1775, but no such burial appeared. It is certain that the vault of Dr. Rogers' family is in Christ Church, and his son, Mr. George Pigott Rogers, was buried in it a few years ago. Whether the doctor had another vault elsewhere, in which he was buried, I cannot say. The vault in Christ Church has certainly a more modern appearance than most of the others."

never too late to do justice to the dead, the virtues of this truly good and benevolent man would not be long without some tribute to them.

The father of this benevolent man, the old banker and M.P., died in 1750. He left three children: Henry, the subject of the preceding lines; Thomas, who entered the army, served with some distinction in the "Seven Years' War," married a Spanish lady at Minorca, retired on half-pay in 1763, and died shortly after, without issue; and David, who took orders, a young man of considerable talents and much promise in his profession—he died early, and was not married.

Henry, soon after his father's death, married Miss Jane Anne Bettesworth, sister of Sergeant Bettesworth, and a relative of the Earl of Shannon. This lady was highly accomplished, and possessed of every quality of the mind and heart that could endear her to a man of Sheares' disposition, tastes, and habits. The match was one of pure affection, and in their case "the current of true love" did "run smooth," from the commencement of its course till it terminated in death. "The Dublin Magazine," 1798, in an article on the family of the Sheares—evidently written by one well acquainted with it—among other circumstances connected with the literary and parliamentary pursuits of the elder Sheares, mentions his having established a private club, where popular and literary subjects were debated; "and his

speeches," says the writer, "were long remembered by his friends as pleasing memorials of great historical knowledge, a fine taste, and graceful elocution."

"His sons," this writer states, "the late Henry and John Sheares, had the best masters to attend them in the house, under his own eye: he narrowly inspected what company they kept, and at a proper age they were sent to the university, where, being young men of good natural parts, they acquired a considerable degree of reputation."

Old Henry Sheares, the member for Cloghnakilty, died in the spring of 1776; and I find his will was proved in the Prerogative Court, the 14th day of May in that year. He directs that his remains should be interred by night, and in the most private manner. This request is found also expressed in the will of his father, Mr. Henry Sheares, of Goldenbush, in the county of Cork, proved in the year 1750, wherein he directs that the expense of his funeral shall not exceed five pounds. The desire is also specified in the will of Mrs. Jane Anne Sheares, the mother of Henry and John, to be buried as privately as possible, in the vault of Mr. Rogers of Cork, where the remains of her excellent husband are laid, provided the expense did not exceed ten pounds; but if more, in the words of Scripture

employed by the testator, "where the tree falls there let it lie."

Mr. Sheares had carried on the banking business in Cork for many years, in conjunction with Dr. Rogers and Mr. Travers, gentlemen of landed property in the county. In Smith's History of Cork, published in 1750, the name of Henry Sheares is found in the list of magistrates of the county; and by the Parliamentary Debates for the year 1763–4, he appears to have taken an active part in the proceedings of the House.

In the journals of the House, 30th of November, 1765, I find the following entry: "Ordered, that leave be given to bring in the heads of a bill for the better regulation of trials in cases of treason and felony; and that Mr. Sheares, Mr. M'Aulay, and Dr. Lucas, do prepare and bring in the bill."

The bill was brought in by Mr. Sheares, and committed the 31st of January, 1766; received an additional clause the 11th of March, and passed into law 7th June, 1766.

I have been particular in specifying these circumstances, as an erroneous opinion generally prevails—even among well-informed people—that it was a clause in this bill, introduced by Mr. Sheares, by which the evidence of one witness was declared sufficient, in cases of treason, to convict in Ireland. But having carefully ex-

amined this short act, I find there is not one word on the subject of evidence in it; but the whole tenor of the act is in favour of the accused persons—its two chief clauses being to the following effect: "That the prisoner shall be furnished with a copy of the indictment five clear days before trial, on application for the same; and shall be admitted to defend himself by counsel; and the court shall on his request assign him counsel, not exceeding two."—5th Geo. III.

The patron of the borough for which Mr. Sheares sat in parliament was his friend Richard, Earl of Shannon, whose successor, at the period of the Union, had no less than thirteen boroughs at his disposal; and disposing of them to the best advantage—according to Sir Jonah Barrington—received at the rate of £15,000 for each borough.[1]

Mr. Sheares' name is to be found in the pension list presented to the House of Commons in 1771—the sum of £200 per annum having been granted to him on the score of his services; which pension was continued to him till he obtained the lucrative appointment of Weigh-master of the city of Cork.

Old Mr. Sheares left a numerous family. The names of the children mentioned in his will are, Henry, Robert Bettesworth, Richard, John, and

[1] *Vide* Barrington's Memoirs of the Union, vol. ii. p. 378.

Christopher Humphrey; Letitia, Mary, Jane Anne Bettesworth, and Julia.

Mrs. Sheares was left sole executrix; and "to his dear friend the Earl of Shannon," Bayley and Joseph Rogers (and not to his friend Carleton, one of the judges who presided at the trial of his sons, as it is generally supposed), he committed the charge of watching over the interests of his wife and children.

His real estate and personal property devolved on his eldest son, Henry, subject to an annuity of £200 a-year to Mrs. Sheares. The sum of £2,500 he left for the advancement of his youngest son. In "The Annual Register" an account is given of this family, in which there are several erroneous statements respecting the property left to the widow and children of the elder Sheares, and the fortune which his son Henry is there stated to have received with Miss Swete on his marriage—namely, £600 a-year.

Of the daughters of old Henry Sheares, one married a Mr. Gubbins of Limerick; another married Mr. Henry Westropp; another, Dr. Payne of Upton; his fourth daughter, Julia, the favourite sister of her unfortunate brother John, was not married, and died a few years ago.

Henry Sheares' Charitable Institution for the Relief of Persons confined for Small Debts, founded 17th July, 1774, is largely noticed in "The Hibernian Magazine" for May, 1775.

In "The Hibernian Magazine" for April, 1775, the essay by Sheares, on Forgiveness of Injuries, signed "Agricola," is given at length in that number; and also another very remarkable one by that gentleman, similarly signed, in the July number for same year, entitled, "On man in society, and at his final separation from it."

The widow of Henry Sheares, sen., had the misfortune to survive all her children, with the exception of her daughter Julia. Four of her sons perished by untimely ends previously to her death. Her amiable spirit was sorely tried by afflictions; and in mercy they terminated, soon after the last and direst calamity of all fell upon her children in 1798. Inscrutable, indeed, are the dispensations of Providence: the sins of the fathers are visited on the children of the unrighteous, to the third and fourth generation; but the noblest virtues of the parents are not always sufficient to shield their offspring from the direst calamities! Such is the will of Heaven; and we bow to those decrees which human wisdom cannot comprehend, but more than reason brings us to believe are planned by wisdom that is not human, and ordained for ends that are not evil.

The aged widow of old Henry Sheares, after the calamities which fell on the last of her sons, went to England, and passed the remainder of her wretched days at Clifton. The fate of her

unfortunate sons was ever present to her mind, and its remembrance "brought her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Her daughter Julia and the widow of her son resided with her till her death, and that event broke up the home of the friendless and forlorn creatures who survived her. Her friend and kinsman, Major-General Bettesworth, died in July, 1801. The life of this poor lady for many years had been one continued scene of misfortune; affliction on affliction fell on her in quick succession; four of her sons in the prime of life were taken from her by violent deaths. Broken down at length by her sufferings, it pleased God in his mercy to release her from them. She died at Clifton in the year 1803, having survived the last of her sons about five years. Her will was proved at the Prerogative Court in Dublin, the 28th of June, the same year.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CAREER OF THE SHEARES

WHEN old Henry Sheares of Goldenbush—later of Glasheen, and of the firm of Sheares and Rogers of Cork—died in 1776, he left five sons and four daughters. Of the sons, Henry, Robert Bettesworth, Richard, John, and Christopher Humphrey, two only were surviving in 1798—namely, Henry and John.

Christopher entered the army, and died at an early age of yellow fever in the West Indies. Richard entered the navy, and rose to the rank of lieutenant, and perished on board his majesty's ship "Thunderer," which ship sailed from St. Helen's with the other vessels of the British fleet in 1778, under the command of Admiral Keppel, and was lost on the West India station in the great hurricane of October, 1779, the Hon. Robert Boyle Walsingham, son of the first Earl of Shannon, then having his broad-pennant on board the "Thunderer." Robert Sheares, at a very early age, was drowned in attempting to save his brother John when they were bathing together. I am informed by a lady to whom I am

indebted for much information respecting the latter—the late Mrs. Smith, daughter of —— Steele, Esq., of Merrion-square (and, when Miss Maria Steele, the Stella of many passionate poetical effusions of John Sheares)—that she had often heard John say with great emotion that "he had caused the death of two of his brothers—one who was drowned in attempting to save him when a boy; and Christopher, his youngest brother, who being reluctant to go to the West Indies, he had persuaded to go there." Henry was born in 1753. He received a university education, and was a cotemporary of Barrington at Trinity College, Dublin. He entered the army at an early age, and first served in the 51st regiment of foot. He subsequently renounced the military for the legal profession, and was called to the bar in 1790. John was nearly thirteen years younger than his brother, and was born about the year 1766. He was placed under the care of the Rev. G. Lee of Cork, and appears to have distinguished himself there in his fifteenth year.

By the college books I find that he entered the University of Dublin as a pensioner the 20th January, 1783, under Mr. Slack, his college tutor.

In Mr. T. Crofton Croker's "Popular Songs of Ireland" an account is given, from Fitzgerald's Cork Remembrancer, of a public entertainment, succeeding a parade of the Cork volunteers on

the 17th of March, 1780, at which a song was sung from the manuscript copy of which, in the autograph of Mr. John Sheares, it is printed in Mr. Crofton's work. It begins thus:

> "St. Patrick he is Ireland's saint,
> And we're his Volunteers, sir;
> The hearts that treason cannot taint,
> Their fire with joy he hears, sir," &c.

The composition is that of a boy not above fourteen years of age, and certainly exhibits very little indication of poetic talent.

The Cork Volunteers made their first public display on the 12th of April, 1778. Fitzgerald, in his Cork Remembrancer, quoted by Mr. Croker, states: "The True Blues, Boyne, Aughrim Union, and Culloden societies walked in procession to Christ Church, according to seniority, being the first public appearance made by these sons of liberty."

Mr. Robert Milliken (a venerable old man, still living in Cork, 91 years of age), brother of Richard Alfred Milliken (the author of "The Groves of Blarney"), who died in August, 1815, and is buried at Douglas, says he knew the Sheares intimately from 1785 to 1798. In 1784, he saw them play in the amateur play of the second part of Henry IV., for the debtors' charity in Cork at the Theatre Royal. Henry played the part of the Prince of Wales; John played Prince John of Lancaster; George Ekins played Falstaff; and Alexander Pope, then a portrait

painter in Cork—a Cork man, born in the debtors' gaol, his father at that time a prisoner there for debt—played Hotspur. Miss Young, a celebrated young actress, was then starring it in Cork; she met Pope, took a fancy to him, and married him. Sir Henry Browne Hayes—who was subsequently tried for abduction of Miss Pike, sentenced to be hanged, but had his sentence remitted to transportation, and who died about twenty years ago—played the part of Hostess Quickly; a Mr. Davy MacDonnell—a Cork man—played the part of Henry IV., afterwards a literary man in London on the papers; the part of Francis was played by Andrew Franklin, afterwards a playwright in London; the part of Bardolph was played by Counsellor Moore.

In the council book of the Cork corporation, vol. vi. p. 215, I find a minute, under date 8th May, 1776, to the following effect: "Ordered that Henry Sheares, Esq., being the eldest son of Henry Sheares, Esq., deceased, who was a freeman at large of this city, be admitted a freeman at large of the same."

The eldest brother, Henry, at his father's death, succeeded to property estimated at £1,200 a-year. He was by no means successful, however, in his management, and was ultimately obliged to dispose of some portion of it. It would still have been ample for his support, with ordinary prudence; and the circumstance of his son,

Richard Benjamin, at his decease, in November, 1835, having then left property he inherited from his father estimated at about £600 a-year, shows that his means were still considerable, however embarrassed they had been. Through Lord Shannon's interest, Henry Sheares obtained a commission in the 51st regiment of foot, but he did not continue in the army above three years. He was twice married; his first wife was the only daughter of Mr. Swete, of Cork, supposed at the time of his marriage to be possessed of immense wealth. When Lord Clare was a young, briefless barrister (then Mr. Fitzgibbon), before he had become acquainted with Miss Whaley, whom he married in July, 1786, he had paid his addresses to Miss Swete, and had been rejected. She subsequently eloped with Henry Sheares—and the rejected admirer never forgot or forgave the success of his rival. Henry Sheares was married to Miss Swete, in the month of August, 1782. His father-in-law, John Swete, Esq., senior alderman of Cork, died, aged 90, in December, 1805.

This circumstance deserves to be remembered and to be recalled, when the failure is referred to of every effort that was made to save this rival from an ignominious death; and the cause of that failure is attributed, it is to be feared with too much justice, to the implacable hostility of Lord Clare to both the brothers, but particularly to the

elder. Miss Swete, who, it was generally imagined, was to have a large fortune, in the usual vagueness of Irish calculation on such subjects, estimated at that time at £50,000, was no sooner married, than her father failed, and all the rumoured dowry vanished into air. About the period of this occurrence Henry had some thoughts of offering himself as a candidate for the representation of his native city; but whatever steps he might have taken in canvassing on that occasion, it does not appear that he entered on the contest. The consequences of his father-in-law's embarrassments, obliged him to study the law as a profession, having previously retired from the army.

Henry Sheares was called to the bar in the Michaelmas term of 1789—his brother John having been admitted a barrister the year previously. He removed to Dublin and entered on his profession. From the commencement of their career in that city they resided together; first in apartments on Ormond Quay, at the house of a Miss Reid; and from 1796, in Baggot-street, in which they continued to live to the time of their arrest.

The wife of Henry Sheares died on the 11th of December, 1791, and was interred in the burying-ground of St. Peter's Church, Aungier-street, where the tombstone placed over her remains by her husband still exists, bearing the following inscription:

"Here lies the body of Mrs. Alicia Young Sheares,
The beloved and lamented wife of Henry Sheares,
Who departed this life the 11th December, 1791,
In the 34th year of her age."

And at no great distance from this grave, in the same churchyard, the remains of Lord Clare are buried, and these words are inscribed on the stone erected to his memory.

"Here lieth the body of John Fitzgibbon,
Earl of Clare,
Lord High Chancellor of Ireland,
Who departed this life the 28th of May, 1802,
Aged 54 years."

The Hotspur of his party, who caused the land to tremble at his name, lies here at rest; the turbulent, overbearing politician, who set the country in a flame, is still and quiet as the meanest of the dead.

"Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit,
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now, two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough."

After the death of Mrs. Henry Sheares, her children were taken under the care of their grandmother.

The circumstances of Mr. and Mrs. Swete, about this time, rendering it necessary for them to quit their native country, they went to one of the French provinces and took the three eldest of the children with them. In the year 1792, Henry Sheares paid a visit to France, to see his children, and was accompanied by his brother.

The revolution in that country was then making rapid progress; and the stirring events that were taking place in the capital led the brothers to Paris, where they remained for some weeks. During their residence in the French capital, they became acquainted with the leading men of the revolution, and intimately so with Roland and Brissot. They attended the meetings of various political societies; they became interested in the questions that were then the general subjects of discussion; and those subjects were certainly calculated to excite the imagination, and to inflame the political feelings of the young and inexperienced of any country, but more especially of one in which liberty had lately achieved a partial triumph, and had still left more political evils to be redressed than perhaps existed in any other part of Europe at that time. Their language, at some of these meetings, in reference to Irish politics, was considered by some of their own countrymen then in Paris—and of their own politics—as imprudent and unguarded.

From 1789 to the summer of 1792, the French revolution was conducted with comparative moderation, and never was there more ability displayed than the events of that time had called into activity. The subject of good government was ably and fearlessly discussed; and the well-being of the people was the professed end and aim of all political inquiry.

No wonder if the minds of those who attended these discussions—probably at first from motives of curiosity—were eventually excited by such topics, and that they suffered themselves to be led away by the enthusiasm which surrounded them.

The wonder is, not that such a result should take place; but while we flatter ourselves, were we placed in such circumstances we would have resisted every evil influence, we have reason to be thankful our lot had not been like that of our fathers—in youth, and without experience, to be launched on those tempestuous times. It is certain that the visit of the Sheares to France produced a marked effect on the political sentiments of both the brothers, and was noticed by many of their friends on their return.

In the latter part of 1794, or beginning of 1795, Henry made the acquaintance of Miss Sarah Neville, the daughter of Mr. Neville of Mary Mount, in the county Kilkenny, of a highly respectable family. Mrs. Neville was the sister of Sir Robert Hudson, and her husband the brother of Mr. Brent Neville, Sheriff's Peer and merchant of Dublin. Shortly after their intimacy, Miss Neville became the wife of Henry Sheares. Those who knew her well, describe her as no less remarkable for her beauty than her accomplishments.

The library of the Sheares was said—by one

well qualified to form an opinion on such a subject—to be one of the best selected private collections that person had ever seen. Henry was not a man of very studious habits or of remarkable intellectual powers; but was possessed of moderate abilities, and a taste for the literature of the day; had considerable conversational powers; expressed himself clearly and generally strongly: on subjects which engaged his feelings, he spoke with vehemence and apparent brusqueness, which many persons interpreted as an evidence of an overbearing temper and of hauteur, but which all those intimately acquainted with him in private life considered as attributable to a peculiarity of manner rather than to his natural disposition. He was honourable in his principles, frank, and ingenuous. In quitting the army he had not shaken off the military air and carriage; and there was, by all accounts, a dash of the soldier in his deportment and mode of expression, that denoted qualities better suited for the camp than the inns of court. He was fond of society, and, to use the words of one of its brightest ornaments who knew him well, "he was fitted for its highest circles." His fondness for show—for the luxuries of life, as well as for its pleasures—were little calculated to give any impression of republican simplicity, or indeed to justify the opinion that his principles were originally of a very democratic character. Had he entered the

political arena half a century later, there is every reason to conjecture, his opinions would hardly have gone far enough for the party of the out-and-out reformers in these days. Treason in his time was not a mere act of overt hostility to the sovereign, or of violence against his authority; but every man who advocated reform, and deprecated parliamentary corruption was designated a "traitor" by the members of administration; and hostility to that administration, however constitutionally carried on, was regarded as "seditious," and branded in parliament by that opprobrious term.

It is easy, and even consolatory now, to the feelings of political leaders, when their opinions travel swiftly and commodiously on the railways of reform, to upbraid the opponents of oppression, the vehicles of whose opposition were dragged over the rough road of parliamentary corruption, and to include all who made themselves obnoxious to the enemies of reform in the sweeping obloquy of a term that has often been imposed before it has been deserved. In the case of the Sheares, long before either brother was involved in the guilt of treason, the opinions they expressed in favour of reform and Catholic emancipation were denounced by Lord Clare in his place in parliament; and the elder brother, in particular, was stigmatized by that intemperate man as a disaffected person.

It was the policy of the time to render every man suspected of disaffection who took any part in politics adverse to the views of the faction which swayed the administration. The government, in fact, was in the hands of the Beresfords and Fitzgibbons.[1]

The brothers, on their return from France, became members of the United Irishmen Society.

The sojourn of the Sheares in Paris during the worst days of the reign of terror, in the latter part of 1792 and beginning of 1793, is connected with a circumstance related by the late Mr. John O'Connell, in his "Life and Speeches of O'Connell," of very great importance to the character of the Sheares—of such importance as to render it necessary to relate it in the precise words of Mr. John O'Connell.

O'CONNELL AND THE SHEARES.

An extract from "The Life and Speeches of Daniel O'Connell, M.P.," edited by his son, John O'Connell, M.P.; vol. i. Dublin: Duffy; London: Dolman, 1846:

At length came the order and the funds for the home journey. On the 21st December, 1793, the day the unfortunate Louis was beheaded at Paris, the brothers set out in a voiture for Calais, which they reached early on the morning of the 23rd, not, however, without some parting compliments from their friends the soldiery,

[1] The Honourable William Beresford, Archbishop of Tuam, married the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgibbon, sister to the chancellor.

who went so far as several times to strike the head of the vehicle with their musket stocks. The English packet-boat, aboard which the boys proceeded with as little delay as possible, was presently under weigh; and as she passed out of the harbour, Mr. O'Connell and his brother eagerly tore out of their caps the tricolour cockade, which the commonest regard for personal safety rendered indispensable to be worn by every one in France, and after trampling them under foot, flung them into the sea. This boyish outburst of natural execration of the horrors which had been committed under that emblem, procured them a few of those sonorous curses, which only a Frenchman can give, from some fishermen rowing past at the moment, by whom the cockades were rescued from the waves, and placed in their hats with all becoming reverence.

It was the packet-boat which brought over the intelligence of the murder of the king. On board that packet-boat were the unfortunate John and Henry Sheares, whose tragic fate in the year 1798 is so well known. To their heated minds the revolution of France did not bear the same revolting aspect that it did to others; and they were loud in praise and prediction of its ultimate tendencies to good, in despite of the crimes and abominations marking its progress. The execution of the unhappy Louis was freely canvassed between them and an English gentleman on board, and John Sheares boasted that he and his brother had been present, having paid two national guards for liberty to wear their uniforms and do their duty for them on that occasion. "Good heavens! sir," said the English gentleman, "what could have induced you to desire to witness

so horrible a spectacle?" "Love of the cause, sir," was the reply. . . .

The experience of this part of his life very nearly converted Mr. O'Connell into a Tory; and his conversion was effected (October, 1794) by a close and diligent attendance at Hardy's trial, the glaring iniquity of which "confirmed his natural detestation of tyranny and desire of resisting it."

Now all these details Mr. O'Connell gave me, *viva voce,* in his study, in the presence of Mr. O'Neil Daunt. This was shortly after the publication of my memoir of "The United Brothers—Henry and John Sheares," and I well remember Mr. O'Neil Daunt thinking himself privileged, on the occasion above referred to, to ask me, "Have you written a panegyric on such men?" "I have written of them what I knew or believed to be true," was my reply.

There is certainly a very remarkable anachronism in the preceding account. Louis XVI. was executed on the 21st January, 1793, and yet here we are informed that Mr. O'Connell met the Sheares on board the Calais packet on their return from Paris, where they had been assisting at the execution of Louis XVI.; and yet we are told this packet sailed from Calais on the morning of the 23rd of December, 1793, the king having been beheaded on the 21st of December, 1793, according to O'Connell.

Mr. John O'Connell evidently fell into an error

of very great importance, with regard to the date of the execution of Louis XVI.; he was not executed on the 21st of December, 1793, as he states, but on the 21st of January, 1793, eleven months preceding the rencontre on board the Calais packet, when the scene described is said to have taken place. The scene itself as described by Mr. John O'Connell, in no material respect differs from the account given to me of it by his father. Of the main fact of the Sheares having stated they had witnessed the execution of Louis XVI. I have no doubt; and of their having expressed opinions very different from those of Mr. O'Connell on the subject of the revolution, I can well believe; but the very circumstance of the marked difference of their opinions may have led, on the part of Mr. O'Connell, to an erroneous interpretation of the words ascribed to John Sheares, as expressive of approval of the crimes of the revolution. The inference left to be drawn by Mr. O'Connell's account of the behaviour of both brothers on this occasion is, that they approved of the execution of the king. No direct expression of approbation of it, however, is imputed to either of them. And, moreover, it is to be borne in mind that upwards of half a century had intervened between the occurrence described and O'Connell's relation of it—if, as I think it very likely, Mr. John O'Connell's account is taken from Mr. Daunt's report of the conversation on

this subject between myself and Mr. O'Connell. The recollection of the conversation that took place betwen the Sheares and their fellow-passengers in 1793, without any written note of it to refer to, at the expiration of half a century cannot be expected to be free from all error.

The fact of the Sheares having been present at the execution of Louis XVI. I have no doubt was related by them; and that their presence at it called for the strong expression attributed to the English gentleman, who wondered how they could "desire to witness so horrible a spectacle," I admit.

But still be it remembered it was John Sheares who made the alleged observation—in reply to the English gentleman—"Love of the cause, sir." No expression of opinion is imputed to Henry Sheares.

And yet, however unfavourably even that expression, supposing it to be literally reported, might make one think of the feelings, and good taste, and sound, sober judgment of John Sheares, I am in a position to show that evidence can be adduced worthy of credit, of his expressing, in the strongest terms, feelings of indignation at the idea of any act of violence being done to the Queen of France, who was then imprisoned in the Temple—and this, too, at the very period of the expression ascribed to him of so contrary a character in relation to Louis XVI.

In "The Memoirs and Correspondence of Lord Castlereagh," edited by his brother, vol. i., p. 258, I find an extract of a letter, dated 3rd of August, 1798, addressed to Mr. Wickham by Mr. Henry Redhead Yorke—a gentleman who in his early days had been a great agitator of the question of Reform—enclosed in a letter of Mr. Wickham to Lord Castlereagh, dated from Whitehall, 10th of August, 1798, marked secret, and commencing with the following passage:

I send your lordship, enclosed, an extract of a letter, containing some curious information relative to the two Sheares. It is written by one of their old companions, the famous Mr. Henry Yorke. It is wished, however, that the name of the writer should be concealed.

The enclosure in Mr. Wickham's letter is thus headed:

EXTRACT OF A LETTER, DATED 3RD AUGUST, 1798.

I was well acquainted in Paris with the two Messrs. Sheares, who lately suffered. The fate of the younger did not surprise me, but I was astonished to learn that the elder was also implicated, for he was apparently a man of most meek and exemplary manners, the father of an infant, and a widower—ties sufficiently strong, methinks, to have curbed his ambition. He was however entirely under the influence of his brother, and though he said little, he was quite (as the French say), when he did speak, *a la hauteur de la revolution.* The younger was the *boutefeu* of all the exiled patriots there. He was the man who proposed an address to

the Convention for carrying arms against this country. If you look into the preface of my trial, you will see the account, though while he lived I never mentioned his name. I have heard it remarked, and I have found the remark just, that no subject of the British crown who entered into the views of the French returned from France without importing with him much of the ferocity of the French character, and much of the bombast of their style. This has been fully illustrated by the manifesto that was found upon the younger.[1] Laying aside his politics, he was a very accomplished young man. I went with both of them to Versailles, and we visited the little Trianon, which the Queen of France had constructed. The younger Sheares was so enchanted with the taste of a person who could conceive so beautiful a retreat, that he fell on his knees, and swore he would plunge a dagger in the heart of every Frenchman he met, if a hair of her head were touched. I have sent you this little anecdote of those unfortunate gentlemen, whom I presume you did not know. I will not conceal that I felt deeply afflicted at their fate, and I sincerely wish that the impression may not be lost in any part of the country. The example is awful. May it serve to guard the monarchy and enlighten the deluded.[2]

The terms in which Mr. Yorke deems it prudent to speak of John Sheares' political opinions are to be considered in connection with the cir-

[1] The paper in question, in the handwriting of John Sheares, was not found upon him, but in the house of his brother, with whom he lived.

[2] "Memoirs of Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh," vol. i. p. 258.

cumstances in which he stood at this period (1798) with the government. The 22nd of July, 1795, Henry Redhead Yorke was tried and convicted at the York assizes on a charge of sedition; and was subsequently sentenced to pay a fine of £200, and to be imprisoned two years in Dorset gaol. He evidently had experienced the lenity of the government, and had read his political recantation with a view to his liberation, or in gratitude for it.

CHAPTER III

ACTIVITIES IN 1793

IT will be borne in mind that the Sheares must have returned from France about the 23rd of January, 1793. They returned to Ireland with a very evident leaning to political pursuits and speculations, and very soon were actively engaged in that terrible arena of Irish politics, from which to withdraw with safety—or with honour, if with safety—was a consummation more devoutly to be wished than expected by those who unfortunately, either for themselves or their country, entered on it. They became active members of the Leinster Society of United Irishmen.

The part taken by both brothers, in the proceedings of the society at this time, was such as moderate reformers in our days might be supposed to take.

The society had not then swerved from its first character, and abandoned its original constitution. That both were unobjectionable, we have the admission of Mr. Pollock, a writer, the most able antagonist of that society at a later period, when the new organization took place, and the only writer, of all the political scribblers of that

period hostile to the United Irishmen Society, whose arguments it would be difficult for even the ablest of the United Irishmen to refute.

Pollock, speaking of this society in his admirable letters addressed to the inhabitants of Newry in 1792, says:

In making war on the United Irishmen of Dublin, I attack a society whose first establishment and principles, in their spirit and general tendency, I approved of; of which, but for some trifling accident—some lucky or unlucky circumstances in their formation—I should myself have been a member, or proposed as such. I take liberties with a body of men, some few individuals of whom, that I have lived in a degree of intimacy with —men of considerable talents, and I believe of much private worth—I feel a personal and even affectionate regard for; a body, to the great majority of whom, as individuals, I attribute perfectly good intentions towards their country, and even its constitution, so far as the majority have taken the trouble or used the means to understand it; and to whom, as a society, I leave this testimony of my private opinion—that they have contributed to raise, assimilate, and warm into new life and energy, the divided, and thereby depressed spirits of their countrymen. Happy, had they but known where to stop![1]

The writer points out the matters in which he considers they had shown indiscretion—namely, "in merging the simple discussion of the ques-

[1] *Vide* Pollock's Letters to the Inhabitants of Newry, 1793. Letter ix.

tion of emancipation and reform, in theoretical disquisitions on the principles of government," &c. &c.

Neither in the speeches nor in the writings of the Sheares, at the period of the address presented to Messrs. Butler and Bond, was there any matter in the slightest degree of a treasonable character, or of a seditious tendency; yet it was regarded at that time as such; and henceforth the language of Lord Clare, whenever he spoke of the Sheares, was that of violent invective—nay, of vindictive bitterness.

Violence begets violence; and it certainly was so with respect to Fitzgibbon's intemperance; for it is admitted by those most intimately acquainted with the Sheares, that they gave vent to their feelings of resentment against Lord Fitzgibbon in the loudest terms of reproach. This partizan judge, it is well known, carried with him his inveterate animosity to his political opponents even on the bench. The ear of the judge was never for an advocate of politics opposite his own. In the case of Curran he carried this spirit of judicial rancour to the extent of virtually banishing him from his court; and according to the account given by the son in his admirable life of his father, he estimated his losses from Fitzgibbon's conduct towards him at £30,000.

The offence of advocating reform was like the crime of Mr. Grogan, in presiding at a public

meeting in Wexford, hostile to an Orange administration—a sufficient motive for calling in question the loyalty of that old gentleman, and keeping the suspicion of treason suspended over his head till the insurrection "exploded," and the offence against the dominant faction was expiated in blood. For a similar offence of opposition to the measures of administration—years before the outbreak of the rebellion—Sir Edward Crosbie was likewise suspected of disaffection to the faction; and he, too, when the day of reckoning came, in 1798, "was sacrificed in the confusion of the times."

He died the death of a traitor, indeed; but many an innocent man, besides Sir Edward Crosbie, has been called a traitor, whose murderers posterity denominates miscreants.

Sir Jonah Barrington states: "The execution of Sir Edward Crosbie was a murder—that of Mr. Grogan a butchery. The viceroy had signed no warrants for the execution; he was not consulted concerning the prisoners till their fate had been decided." [1]

If Crosbie and Grogan failed to realize the suspicions which were formed of their fidelity—if the injustice that was done them by such suspicions had not carried their indignation to such terms of desperation as had driven the Sheares

[1] *Vide* Barrington's "Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation," pp. 375-6.

into rebellion—they fared no better; they had all incurred the displeasure of the faction; and their conduct as political opponents, or even as private adversaries, was sufficient to establish their criminality as men of republican principles and traitors.

The earliest account, I find, of either of the Sheares taking any part in the proceedings of those meetings is one which took place in the month of June, 1793. At that period none but men eminent for their talents, rank in society, or professional ability, usually presided over their meetings. From the commencement of the society to the year 1794, among the persons we find filling the chair, are the Honourable Simon Butler, Dr. Drennan, Bagenal Beauchamp Harvey, and John Sheares. The latter, when he presided at a meeting of the society on the 16th of August, 1793, called for the purpose of preparing and presenting an address to Messrs. Butler and Bond, recently liberated from confinement, had only then attained his twenty-seventh year; and at a time when the society abounded with men of rank and talent, so young a man as John Sheares to have been called to the chair, shows that he must have been held in high repute by his associates.

The first cause of Lord Clare's animosity to the Sheares was of as old a date as the marriage of Henry with Miss Swete of Cork; and there is

even much reason to fear that Lord Clare never forgot or forgave the preference given to his rival in this affair. The next circumstance that created ill-will took place in 1793, on the occasion of Henry Sheares demanding an explanation of the injurious language used by the former, in his place in parliament, in reference to a speech delivered at one of the meetings of United Irishmen. An explanation was demanded and refused: a sort of verbal communication, however, was made, which satisfied the friend of Henry Sheares, but which was anything but satisfactory to the injured party.

The following account of this affair is extracted from the proceedings of the Society of United Irishmen, printed privately in 1794:

UNITED IRISHMEN.

26th July, 1794.

Henry Sheares having been requested to leave the Chair, James Dixon, Chairman, William Levington Webb, Secretary, the following publication was read:

TO THE PUBLIC.

The following paragraph appeared in "The Freeman's Journal" on Saturday, 20 inst., and afterwards in other prints, as a part of the Lord Chancellor's Speech in the House of Lords.

Paragraph.—"There were in Dublin two persons who were members of the French Jacobin Club, and who, his lordship believed, were in the pay of that

society to foment sedition in this country. One of their names appeared at the head of a printed paper published last month by the United Irishmen, to which society they also belonged."

On the perusal of the above paragraph, Henry Sheares informed the meeting he wrote the following letter to his lordship:

"My Lord—Having this day seen in the public prints of yesterday a gross and infamous calumny, which from the strength of its allusions I cannot avoid considering as directed against me, I think it incumbent on me to address myself to your lordship, prior to taking any step towards the punishment of its author.

"I am induced to take this liberty, my lord, from the circumstances of your lordship's name having been made use of (falsely, I am persuaded) to sanction the malignant falsehood contained in that publication. It is therein asserted that your lordship, in the House of Lords, represented me as a member and agent of the Jacobin Club in France, and employed by them to foment sedition in this country; an assertion which I am bound to believe as ill-founded in relation to your lordship as I know it to be false in respect to me. Assuring your lordship of my perfect conviction that such an accusation could never have proceeded from the alleged source, I take the liberty of requesting that your lordship will authorize me to assert that the publication was unwarranted by anything that fell from your lordship, and that I may have your lordship's permission for such legal proceedings against the publisher as may seem advisable.

"I am, my lord, your lordship's most obedient, very humble servant,

"HENRY SHEARES.

"Baggot-street, 21st July, 1793."

[Note addressed to the society.]

"Dublin, 26th July, 1793.

"Having received no answer to the above letter, I deem it a duty I owe to myself, to the society to which I belong, and to the public in general, to lay the circumstances of this transaction before the nation.

"HENRY SHEARES."

Resolved—That HENRY SHEARES be addressed by this society.

UNITED IRISHMEN TO HENRY SHEARES.

"This society, in its choice of a president, has been directed to you by its conviction of your patriotic and constitutional principles.

"If by this mark of our respect and confidence you have been exposed to slander of the most singular and unwarrantable nature, you have derived this honourable distinction from the corrupt policy which has been uniformly employed to vilify the most virtuous asserters of their country's rights.

"Convinced that the calumny alluded to in your letter to the Chancellor is unfounded, and that the meanness which marks it, as well as its malignity, renders it impossible for us to suppose that it could have proceeded from the authority to which it has been imputed —but was rather the fabrication of a venal print, which has long insulted the most honourable and independent characters of the community—we earnestly assure you

that we will co-operate with you in every mode of obtaining justice from the laws of your country.

"Amongst us nothing is secret—nothing under-hand. Our numbers, our independence, our individual characters, might stand as tests of our intentions. We have every motive of attachment to the interest and happiness of our country. The sacrifice you make to public duty can only serve to endear you to us more than ever."

To which Henry Sheares gave the following answer:

"United Irishmen—Your affectionate address has made the deepest impression on my heart. I shall ever hope to deserve it. That congenial principle which first led and attached me to you, has received, if possible, additional energy by this testimony of your approbation. From the laws of my country I have no doubt of redress. In contempt and defiance of calumny and oppression, I will devote my life to the great cause for which we first united; confident that, by a firm adherence to the principles of our institution, we shall proportionately effect the welfare and happiness of our native country.

"HENRY SHEARES."

Here the matter ended, with a great deal of dissatisfaction openly (and perhaps violently) expressed on the part of both brothers: the younger talked of challenging the chancellor, and the expression is attributed to him, perhaps unjustly, of "seeking him on the woolsack, if he were not to be found elsewhere!"

The next matter that still further tended to

exasperate the lord chancellor against the Sheares, occurred in 1793. The Honourable Simon Butler and Mr. Oliver Bond were brought to the bar of the House of Lords, the former as chairman, the latter as secretary of a meeting of the Society of United Irishmen, for signing a paper calling in question the privileges of that house, with respect to the examination of witnesses on oath in the recent case of Mr. James Napper Tandy; and both these gentlemen were declared guilty of a breach of privilege, and sentenced to six months' confinement and a fine of £500, on the 1st of March, 1793.

In the month of August following, a meeting was called of the Society of United Irishmen. Mr. John Sheares filled the chair, and an address to the imprisoned chairman and secretary of the former meeting was carried, expressive of the sympathy of the society, and of its sense of the severity of the sentence passed on them.

The rigour of the sentence had been aggravated by the virulence of the language in which it had been pronounced by the chancellor. In addressing the Hon. Mr. Butler on that occasion, Lord Fitzgibbon said "he could not plead ignorance of his offence; that his noble birth and professional rank at the bar, to both of which he was a disgrace, had aggravated his crime." Mr. Butler (who was the son of Lord Mountgarret), a man of considerable talents and independence

of character, no sooner was liberated than he carried the resolution into effect which he had openly avowed while in confinement; he appointed his friend John Sheares to call on Lord Fitzgibbon for an apology for the insulting terms he had applied to him, and in the event of his refusal to demand a meeting.

The friends of John Sheares appear to have seen the impropriety of his acting as second in this case, after having so recently been desirous of appearing as a principal in a similar predicament; and his brother having been denied a meeting by the same individual. He went into the country, and Mr. Archibald Hamilton Rowan was substituted in his place to demand satisfaction of Lord Fitzgibbon.

"When I waited on him," says Mr. Rowan, "I called to his recollection the words he had made use of in passing the sentence of the House of Lords on my friends Messrs. Butler and Bond and those which he had particularly directed to Mr. Butler, which, I hoped to be permitted to say, it was not his lordship's intention should be taken personally, and had been made use of unreflectingly. His lordship said that he thought the circumstances of the case called for the expressions he had used; that he 'never spoke unreflectingly in the situation he filled; and under similar circumstances he would use similar words.' I then said that in mine and Mr. Butler's opinion

the sentence of the Lords did not authorize the words he had used; and if it had occurred between two private gentlemen my course would be plain and easy; but his lordship's situation of chancellor embarrassed me. Here I paused. After some further conversation, his lordship said I knew his situation, and he wished me to recollect it. I then took my leave, saying his lordship's situation prevented me from acting as I would have done with a private gentleman." [1]

The next morning, Mr. Rowan received a visit from his friend Colonel Murray, who accosted him in these words: "So, a pretty piece of work you have made of it, Hamilton! taking a challenge to the chancellor!" The colonel, on being asked how he knew the circumstance, replied, "I have breakfasted this morning with Fitzgibbon, and he told me the whole affair."

There can be little doubt of Lord Fitzgibbon's knowledge of the appointment of John Sheares in the first instance as the friend of Butler; and the circumstance of his being chairman of the meeting at which his proceedings towards Messrs. Butler and Bond had been so roughly handled, was sufficient to incense a man of his arrogant and petulant temper against the impugner of his conduct.

The address on this occasion presented by the society to their imprisoned chairman and secre-

[1] *Vide* Autobiography of Hamilton Rowan, p. 168.

tary, bears the internal evidence, in its style and sentiments, of being the production of John Sheares. The reference in it to one of the great actors in the revolution of France, whose opinions he had lately an opportunity of becoming acquainted with; the admiration of Mirabeau, in the allusion to him—probably inspired by the eloquence of that man, who had the power to command and to control all men's passions but his own; the employment in that document of those new-fangled terms which were then the fashion of French political phraseology; the novel application of the endearing names of "friends and brothers" to political associates; and the far-fetched salutations "in the unity of an honest and honourable cause," furnish presumptive evidence of the writer's acquaintance with the ordinary language of the leading members of the French clubs at that time.

There is indeed less of political bombast in this address than was customary in the speeches and writings of the reformers of that day, when the newly imported jargon of visionary philanthropy infected political discussion in Great Britain and Ireland with the clap-trap expressions of a conventional phraseology: "fraternization" and "citizenship," "natural equality" and the "rights of man," were then in the mouths of all men who called *Libertas, Dea!*

Patriotic affectation is said to be almost as bad

as personal; and one might deem it worse than personal, if, in the fever of the public mind in revolutionary times, one did not duly estimate the influence of political enthusiasm, and while he sickened at its excesses, did not compassionate the deluded votaries, whose confidence in human nature and ignorance of its infirmities had left their hopes and expectations dependent on the conduct of the young, the ardent, the bold, and the inexperienced of their associates; and their own motives, in after times, at the mercy of a depreciating, exaggerating world.

In periods of great public excitement, the observation of Gobinet is peculiarly applicable to those whose youth and inexperience are exposed to the peril of political strife at the commencement of their career—"The time of issuing out of youth and entering into the world, is the most dangerous of all our life." The struggles of such times are to them like the warfare of the middle ages, when each man was regarded as a power, and in the words of the eloquent author of "Godefridus," "Chivalry required every man to believe that he was personally called on to pronounce between error and truth—injustice and justice—vice and virtue." [1]

The time that the Sheares "issued out of youth and entered into the world," was indeed perilous

[1] *Vide* "Godefridus, or the Touchstone of Honour," by K. H. Digby.

to every young man of a noble and an ardent spirit; for patriotism seemed to require what chivalry did of yore—that every man should make his election between wrong and right, as if the issue of the struggle depended on his individual exertions.

This sentiment, noble in itself, is yet productive of evil in its influence on the conduct of the young, whose views are more prospective than retrospective,[1] and whose feelings are more deeply engaged than their reason is calmly exercised in the consideration of the events in the midst of which they have been thrown. The great mischief then to be feared is that men will become "too much concerned with general views and grand abstractions; but not sufficiently practised in the small details of daily life."

"The greatest part of men have by far too high an opinion of their own importance, and over-great confidence in their own strength; but of their own vocation, and of the end to which they are destined, they have in general a sense far too low." [2]

The following particulars respecting the Sheares were communicated to me in writing, in 1836, by Mr. Davock, a silk merchant, formerly

[1] See first address of United Irishmen's Society, 30th December, 1791: "In thus associating, we have thought little about our ancestors—much of our posterity."

[2] *Vide* Philosophie de Lebens, 156.

of Bridge-street, the intimate friend, neighbour, and political associate of Oliver Bond.

John Sheares was intimately acquainted with Bond, Emmet, the Hon. Simon Butler, and Henry Jackson.

He was a man of excellent private character, of good talents, and great personal courage. He was always considered a man of high honour; but his principles most certainly were republican; and I think his objects went much further than reform. He joined the second Society of United Irishmen about 1796, and became a very active member of it. As a barrister he had pretty good practice. I heard that he wrote much for "The Press," but do not know under what signature. The introduction at Byrne's in Grafton-street to Armstrong was a trap laid to ensnare him. Byrne, the bookseller (at whose house he first met Armstrong), subsequently went to America: I do not think he was false to the Sheares—the man who was set on them imposed on Byrne and performed his task completely.

Henry was a man of very gentlemanly address; his talents were thought good; he was looked upon as a man of honour and discretion. At the meeting at Bond's on the 12th of March, he, like many others of the leaders, did not attend; but no suspicion ever attached to his absence.

The gentleman from whom I obtained these few particulars informed me that he was one of the persons who conducted Lord Edward Fitzgerald to Murphy's, in Thomas-street, on one of the occasions of his being concealed there. Mr. Davock died in the year 1837.

John Sheares took no active part in the business of the United Irish Society till after the arrests had taken place at Bond's, and the vacancy in the directory was filled up by his appointment to that perilous office. The part which had been first assigned to him was the direction of the Cork organization. A directory was nominated for that county, but the apprehension of the Sheares paralyzed its first movements; and no outbreak was attempted in the south.

The chief part of the papers of the Sheares fell into the hands of Mr. Charles Coughlan of Cork, the person whom John Sheares speaks of in his last letter to his sister Julia as "the worthy Charles Coughlan." He was a man in humble circumstances, but highly respected, not only in his early, but in his latter days. In 1836, he was still living in his native city, greatly esteemed by all who knew him. In reply to an application of mine for the papers in question, and to certain queries respecting his unfortunate friend, whose fate he never ceased to deplore, I received the following communication through a mutual friend, enclosing several documents relative to the father's early history, the particulars of which I have given at the commencement of this memoir. "During the reign of terror, when every man's home was at the mercy of the privileged marauders," the documents in question, chiefly letters and papers of John's, were concealed in

the ceiling of the old house Mr. Coughlan then inhabited, where he expected they would escape detection; and they were not discovered. But when the storm had passed over, some years after the insurrection of 1803, being about to rebuild his house, he sought the concealed papers, but to his great concern he found that they had been attacked by mice and reduced almost to powder.

The substance of the information afforded by Mr. Coughlan I have embodied in the preceding papers; but the following particulars, as coming from one so entirely in the confidence of the brothers, and from his own excellent qualities so well calculated to form a just opinion of their characters, I have thought it desirable to state apart from any observation of my own:

Henry Sheares was led into the union by his brother John. The latter had been previously a member of the society. They had been to France in the time of the taking of the Bastile; and early in the revolutionary struggle, John had become a member of one of the political clubs in Paris.

Shortly after their return, John became an United Irishman; both he and his brother were thought highly of by the leading members of the society. John was desirous, in 1797, of going to France on a mission in an official capacity, but was thought to be too young for that appointment. From his youth he was strongly attached to republican principles, and earnestly and uniformly opposed to agrarian doctrines.

There was nothing sanguinary in his disposition:

Henry was remarkably humane; and neither were capable of acting on the proclamation referred to. Henry was the best possible domestic character.

Such were the men whose unfortunate lot it was to attempt to carry into execution the long meditated designs of the Society of United Irishmen, at a period when all the leading members of that society were in the power of government—when their plans were known, their intentions frustrated, and the people discouraged and dismayed by the sufferings they endured at the hands of an infuriated soldiery, and a magistracy of privileged partizans whose will was law.

Such were the calamitous circumstances of the times, when party violence seemed as if it sought to

> "Let one spirit of the first-born Cain
> Reign in all bosoms—that each heart being set
> On bloody actions the rude scene may end,
> And darkness be the burier of the dead."

When terror prevailed over the whole country, and hardly one reasonable hope was left for the success of the revolutionary designs of the conspirators, the Sheares were called forth, and the younger brother and another associate were appointed to supply the place of the foremost leaders of that conspiracy.

The state of mind in which the Sheares undertook the management of the desperate affairs of their society may be gathered from the letter addressed, only a month previously to the arrests

at Bond's, to Lord Clare, and intended for publication in "The Press" newspaper. This letter, bearing the signature of "Dion," was written, as I have already stated, by John Sheares. It must have been indiscreetly talked of, previously to its being printed; for we are told by Sampson, who was fully acquainted with all matters connected with this periodical, that the seizure of "The Press," and the suppression of it, was determined on to prevent the intended publication of a letter addressed to Lord Clare, designated therein "the Author of Coercion." "The Press" was accordingly seized, and the obnoxious letter was found in print, in the sixty-eighth and last number of that journal, already prepared for publication.

It is impossible to entertain any opinion but one of the extreme imprudence displayed in this letter, and of the folly of pointing out the dangers to their adversaries which the writer and his party were endeavouring to create. The prophecy with respect to the speedy termination of the power and influence of Lord Clare was soon verified, though the mode of its accomplishment was somewhat different from that predicted. His lordship lived long enough to feel the effects of the great measure he had been mainly instrumental in achieving, in his own humiliation. He survived the success—which was ruinous to his country and fatal to himself—a little better than two years. The execrations of the people which

pursued him through life accompanied him to the grave; and the attendants at his funeral had the painful spectacle to witness of indignities offered to his remains, such as were never, perhaps, before exhibited on such an occasion.[1] Previous to his interment the street in which he had resided was beset by a multitude of people —in fact, for some days, the neighborhood of Ely-place resembled a fair. The only approach I ever witnessed to the savage expression of public exultation, at the interment of a man in the same degree unpopular, was at the funeral of the late Marquess of Londonderry, when his remains were received at the porch of Westminster Abbey with three distinct shouts of acclamation from the multitude of his countrymen assembled at the door of the cathedral!

From the period of John Sheares becoming a member of the directory his activity was unceasing; and the various addresses to the United Irishmen from the directory, through the Dublin committee, from the middle of March to the 20th of May, were drawn up by him. Every exertion that it was possible to make to retrieve the injury caused by the arrest of the eminent leaders of the society was made by him.

[1] It was one of his lordship's vaunting menaces, in the hey-day of his political power and authority, that he would make the people of Ireland as tame as cats! At the interment of his remains in St. Peter's churchyard, a number of dead cats were flung upon his coffin.

In one of the above-mentioned addresses, the people were strongly recommended to abstain from the consumption of excisable articles, or those which pay customary duties, such as wine, spirits, sugar, tobacco, &c.; to banish all violent and intemperate language at their meetings; to diminish as much as possible the risk of taking the oath of the United Irishmen; to be cautious in their admission of members; to abstain from meetings in public houses, &c.

Of the various addresses drawn up by John Sheares, in the short interval of his direction of the affairs of the union, there is one which is too characteristic of the intemperate language of the writer to be omitted:

Irishmen—A new act of base and perfidious tyranny, directed against the whole of the patriotism of Ireland, though immediately and personally operating on only a few individuals, has deprived us for a time of the countenance and consolation of honest and able men, whose only crime is the suspicion of being your friends. Our oppressors—despairing to effect, by the most subtle refinements of legalised murder, by partial sheriffs, by packed juries, and by judges sanguinary, timid, or corrupt, the destruction of the victims whom they had pre-doomed to die at the approaching assizes, so long as they could leave them the protection of faithful and eloquent advocates, known to be zealous in their cause, and pledged to their defence—have robbed the latter of liberty, in order to rob the former of life.

That administration and that legislature, who so lately told you there was no conciliation for Ireland, have with perfect consistency followed up this denunciation of carnage and proscription—of fire and sword—of robbery and rape. This explicit and unequivocal declaration of war on the Irish people, is a proceeding which leaves not a shadow of doubt or ambiguity to disguise their intentions, which forces four hundred thousand fighting men, the physical strength of Ireland, to make in convenient time their final option between death and self-defence, and which proves, by evidence more than palpable, that this nation and that administration cannot exist together.

Yet has this, their last treason, like all their former ones, turned with an overwhelming recoil upon themselves. On the memorable day which saw so many virtuous and respectable citizens of Dublin dragged ignominiously to prison, by arbitrary mandates unsupported by information on oath, confusion and trepidation marked the conduct of the oppressors; while the unclouded serenity, the calm, unassuming fortitude of conscious innocence, beamed from the countenances of the oppressed, with mingled horror and contempt: the capital saw the *Prime Miscreant*, the Robespierre of Ireland, the nefarious author and apologist of atrocities without name and number, appalled by the mere gaze of Irish eyes, and shaking in a paroxysm of rage and terror while the murderous weapon trembled in his palsied hand—the strong thirst of blood struggling in vain with the still stronger impulses of conscious guilt and native cowardice.

For us, the keen but momentary anxiety occasioned by

the situation of our invaluable friends subsided, on learning all the circumstances of the case, into a calm tranquillity, a consoling conviction of mind that they are as safe as innocence can make men now; and to these sentiments were quickly added a redoubled energy, a tenfold activity of exertion, which has already produced the happiest effects. The organization of the capital is perfect. No vacancies existing, arrangements have been made, and are still making, to secure for our oppressed brethren, whose trials approach, the benefit of legal defence; and the sentinels whom you have appointed to watch over your interests stand firm at their posts, vigilant of events, and prompt to give you notice and advice, which, on every occasion at all requiring it, rely on receiving.

This recital, Irishmen, is meant to guard those of you who are remote from the scene of the late events against the consequences of misrepresentation and mistake. The most unfounded rumours have been set afloat; fabricated for the double purpose of delusion and intimidation. Your enemies talk of treachery, in the vain and fallacious hope of creating it; but you, who scorn equally to be their dupes or their slaves, will meet their forgeries with dignified contempt, incapable of being either goaded into untimely violence, or sunk into pusillanimous despondency. Be firm, Irishmen, but be cool and cautious; be patient yet awhile; trust to no unauthorised communications; and, above all, we warn you, and again and again we warn you, against doing the work of your tyrants, by premature, by partial, or divided exertion. If Ireland shall be forced to throw away the scabbard, let it be at her own time, not theirs.

Dublin, 17th March (St. Patrick's Day), 1798.

CHAPTER IV

CAREER FROM 1794 TO 1798

IN 1794, the funeral of the Rev. William Jackson, who was convicted of high treason, was publicly attended by a considerable number of the leaders of the United Irishmen. Amongst those who were bold or indiscreet enough to form part of his cortege, and make this open admission of their sympathy with the views of the deceased, were John and Henry Sheares. The attorney-general, Mr. Wolfe, had been applied to, to take some rigorous measures against the barristers who attended the remains of the unfortunate Jackson to the grave. But this excellent and upright man declined to do so. We are informed by Barrington that the reasons he assigned for passing over this act were, that "both the honour of his profession and the feelings of his own mind prevented him from giving publicity to, or stamping as a crime, what he was sure, in its nature, could only be an inadvertency."

Shortly afterwards, the Sheares had another proof given them of the mildness and clemency of his disposition. An *ex-officio* information

had been filed against a printer in Cork, for matter objectionable to the government published in a newspaper in that city. Sir Jonah Barrington states that the two Sheares turned out to be the real editors of the paper. They were certainly closely connected with the paper, but it is very doubtful if they were the editors or proprietors of it. Sir Jonah states that they begged of him to intercede with the attorney-general. "He had always a strong feeling for the honour and character of his profession, and forgave all parties on conditions which he (Sir Jonah) all but vouched for, but to which they certainly did not adhere." [1]

The interference of Sir Jonah Barrington on this occasion was creditable to his good-nature; but his conduct on a subsequent occasion, it will be seen, was less so to the consistency of his character than to the perspicuity of his prophetic observation. But in the instance of his interference with the attorney-general on the part of the Sheares, he was deterred by no conviction of the criminality of his friends from coming forward on their behalf; and yet he subsequently called the paper against which the *ex-officio* information had been granted "a seditious paper," and the office he performed that of "a mediator between the rebels and Lord Kilwarden."

[1] *Vide* "Irish Sketches," vol. ii. p. 65.

His interference, however, was a proof of the pliability of his disposition. Previously to this affair, on the 29th of April, 1793, a duel took place between Sir Jonah and Mr. M'Nally, the barrister, and both parties were slightly wounded on that occasion. Sir Jonah's second was a Mr. Henry Harding, and M'Nally's was John Sheares, who was accompanied to the ground by his brother Henry and Mr. Bagenal Beauchamp Harvey.

"Both of the latter," says Sir Jonah, "were, I believe, amicably disposed; but a negotiation could not be admitted, and to it they went." The express acknowledgment of the amicable disposition of Henry Sheares and Harvey, and omission of any mention of a desire for an arrangement on the part of John, shows pretty plainly Sir Jonah's opinion that no such desire was manifested by him.

Sir Jonah has given a ridiculous version of this rencontre, in which he damages as much as possible, but in the most "facetious" way imaginable, "his friend" M'Nally. He represents the quarrel as fastened on him by the latter on very little provocation. "M'Nally," he says, "was a good-natured, hospitable, talented, dirty fellow, and had, by the latter qualification, so disgusted the circuit bar, that they refused to receive him at their mess—a cruelty I set my face against, and every summer circuit

endeavoured to vote him into the mess, but always ineffectually; his neglect of his person, the shrillness of his voice, and his frequently low company, being assigned as reasons which never could be set aside."[1] But, according to Sir Jonah, the bar would not only not mess with him, but they would not fight with him, and this, in Sir Jonah's estimation, was "the cruelest cut of all." It reminds one of Tom Cringle's serious objection to either feeding or fighting with the Americans. Harry Deane Grady, it seems, had refused to fight M'Nally; and the latter, in his despair of getting any one to fight him, according to Sir Jonah, fixed a quarrel on him, without much rhyme or reason, for the mere purpose of making a character at the expense of Sir Jonah's condescension, whose own character was, of course, already made.

The plain facts of the matter are these: Sir Jonah Barrington, in 1793, in the course of his professional duties, took occasion to speak of the members of the United Irishmen in opprobrious terms, and he was called to an account for so doing by a member of the society, Mr. Leonard M'Nally.

In one of the well-known organs of the United Irishmen, "The Northern Star," of the 3rd of March, 1797, the duel between these gentlemen is mentioned as having occurred in con-

[1] *Vide* "Irish Sketches," vol. ii. p. 27.

sequence of Counsellor Barrington, at the trial of a gentleman for an assault, having used disparaging language of the United Irishmen Society, "of which," adds the editor, "Mr. M'Nally is a member." The latter assertion is deserving of notice, for reasons already stated. There can be no question but the editor of "The Northern Star" had good means of knowing what leading men were members of that society, and who, belonging to the popular party, were not.

John Sheares, I conjecture, became a member of the directory subsequently to his visit to Wexford to attend the assizes there; and in all probability, had he and his brother not had the misfortune of meeting Barrington at Harvey's dinner-table they might long have survived the memorable year of 1798.

In 1798, Sir Jonah Barrington, a rollicking, facetious, jovial barrister, and time-serving member of parliament, destitute of principle, needy, profligate, versatile, and inconsistent, lavish in expenditure, importunate and exigent, occupied incessantly in borrowing or place-begging—was supporting, with difficulty, two characters—one, of a loyalist of flaming ardour for the interests of the altar and the throne; the other, of a boon companion of gentlemen who were disaffected and seditious. He tells us, in his "Personal Sketches," that "he dined at the house of Lady Colclough (a near relative of his

wife), in the town of Wexford, in April, 1798." At the dinner party (the particulars of which will be found in the memoir of B. B. Harvey) he met several of his friends and relatives. The conversation turned on the distracted state of the country, and from the opinions he heard expressed by several, including friends and relatives, he came to the conclusion that a number of them, of whom "he made out a list," would be hanged. He joked with them on the subject, and, amongst others, with Bagenal Beauchamp Harvey, his "schoolfellow and constant circuit companion for many years." The day following he was invited to dine with Harvey. The account of this dinner party and its results must be told in Sir Jonah's own words:

I accordingly went there to dinner; but that evening proved to me of great uneasiness, and made a very disagreeable impression both on my mind and spirits. The company I met included Captain Keogh, the two unfortunate Counsellors Sheares, who were both hung shortly afterwards; Mr. Colclough, who was hung on the bridge; Mr. Hay, who was also executed; Mr. William Hatton, one of the rebel directory of Wexford, who unaccountably escaped; and a gentleman of the bar, whose name I shall not mention, as he still lives.

The entertainment was good, and the party cheerful. Temple freaks were talked over—the bottle circulated; but at length Irish politics became the topic, and proceeded to an extent of disclosure which utterly surprised me. With the Messrs. Sheares (particularly Henry) I

had always been on terms of the greatest intimacy: I had extricated both of them, not long before, from considerable difficulty through the kindness of Lord Kilwarden; and I had no idea that matters wherein they were concerned had proceeded to the lengths developed on that night. The probability of a speedy revolt was freely discussed, though in the most artful manner, not a word of any of the party committing themselves; but they talked it over as a result which might be expected from the complexion of the times, and the irritation excited in consequence of the severities exercised by the government. The chances of success, in the event of rising, were openly debated, as were also the circumstances likely to spring from that success, and the examples which the insurgents would in that case probably make. All this was at the same time talked over without one word being uttered in favour of rebellion; a system of caution which I afterwards learned was much practised for the purpose of gradually making proselytes without alarming them. I saw through it clearly, and here my presentiments came strong upon me. I found myself in the midst of absolute, though unavowed conspirators. I perceived that the explosion was much nearer than the government expected; and I was startled at the decided manner in which my host and his friends spoke.

Under these circumstances, my alternative was evidently to quit the house, or give a turn to the conversation. I therefore began to laugh at the subject, and ridicule it as quite visionary, observing jestingly to Keogh—"Now, my dear Keogh, it is quite clear that you and I, in this famous rebellion, shall be on different sides

of the question, and of course one or the other of us must necessarily be hanged, at or before its termination —I upon a lamp-iron in Dublin, or you on the bridge of Wexford. Now, we'll make a bargain! If we beat you, upon my honour I'll do all I can to save your neck; and if your folks beat us, you'll save me from the honour of the lamp-iron!"

We shook hands on the bargain, which created much merriment, and gave the whole after-talk a cheerful character, and I returned to Wexford at 12 o'clock at night, with a most decided impression of the danger of the country, and a complete presentiment that either myself or Captain Keogh would never see the conclusion of that summer. On my return to Dublin the following day, I immediately wrote to Mr. Secretary Cooke, without mentioning names, places, or any particular source of knowledge, but simply to assure him that there was not a doubt that an insurrection would break out at a much earlier period than the government expected. I desired him to ask me no questions, but said that he might depend upon the fact, adding that a commanding force ought instantly to be sent down to garrison the town of Wexford. "If the government," said I in conclusion, "does not attend to my warning, it must take the consequences." My warning was not attended to; but his majesty's government soon found I was right. They lost Wexford, and might have lost Ireland, by that culpable inattention.

The result need scarcely be mentioned: every member of that jovial dinner party (with the exception of myself, the barrister before alluded to, and Mr. Hatton),

was executed within three months! and on my next visit to Wexford, I saw the heads of Captain Keogh, Mr. Harvey, and Mr. Colclough, on spikes, over the court-house door.[1]

Sir Jonah Barrington thus makes mention of having met the two Sheares at dinner in B. B. Harvey's during the Wexford assizes, which they had been attending, and he foresaw, he says, on that occasion, their future fate. That part of the prediction of Sir Jonah which had reference to the execution of his friends the Sheares was duly accomplished, and its accomplishment may be considered mainly due to the speculative loyalty of a very truculent lawyer and politician.

Sir Jonah's black list, made out merely for amusement, on the Bridge of Wexford, by some invisible agency—of some bird of passage, perhaps of prey—must have been picked up and fortunately let fall at the feet of Mr. Secretary Cooke. A year subsequently, Sir Jonah sought for the office of solicitor-general; and under all circumstances, he states, Lord Clare and Lord Castlereagh considered his services had deserved the attention of the government: nevertheless Sir Jonah was crotchetty on the subject of "the creeping, incipient Union," and he was left with his knighthood, his small place, and his silk gown; and he considered his "services, under all circumstances," inadequately remunerated.

[1] *Vide* "Irish Sketches," vol i. pp. 163–4–5–6.

But Sir Jonah's true character was never so clearly exhibited as on the debate in the Irish Commons, shortly after the suppression of the rebellion in 1798, on the amnesty which had been recently granted to the unfortunate people who were called rebels; for indeed the whole of the peasantry of Ireland were, previously to that act, considered "out of the king's peace." Sir Jonah, in unmeasured terms, condemned the policy of lenient and conciliatory measures towards rebels, whose subjection was not yet complete: "And this ill-timed amnesty," he said, "was only calculated to irritate and discourage the brave defenders of the country, who had shown such energy in its defence." This was the most sanguinary and uncalled-for speech that had been pronounced in the House since that of Mr. Claudius Beresford, and another similar oration of Colonel Maxwell, at the commencement of the struggle. Barrington's speech was the most wanton in its wickedness, because the rebellion was already suppressed, and the wretched people in complete subjection. Indeed, Sir Jonah seldom or ever spoke in the House, except in hostility to the liberties of the people or in opposition to their advocates; yet his own party distrusted his sincerity, and his opponents left their ranks open to him, and seldom replied to him with any acrimony when he abused them, believing that he was not in ear-

nest, and being willing to leave him a *locus penitentiæ* on the opposition benches.

The United Irishmen were influenced in their conduct towards him by the same opinions of the weakness of his attachment to his party, and their expectation of detaching him from it. Hence the intercourse which existed between them; and at last it proved fatal to the Sheares.

The Sheares, it would appear by one of the letters of John, the day previous to his execution, imagined they had escaped the notice of government; and nothing against them being disclosed in Mr. Reynold's information, they trusted that no suspicion was entertained of them. They were completely mistaken: they were known to have succeeded the arrested members of the directory in furthering its objects; they were watched and set, but they were left at large for some time, to allow the premature explosion of the rebellion to take place, for the same reason that Lord Edward was left at large after the arrests at Bond's for several weeks, during which time Messrs. Hughes and Reynolds visited him in his places of concealment, at Cormick's in Thomas-street, and at Dr. Kennedy's in Aungier-street.

The "gentleman" to whom was committed the honourable task of worming himself into the confidence of the Sheares, for the purpose of betraying them, was a lieutenant in the King's

County militia, of the name of John Warneford Armstrong. He lived long, and died as he lived, callous to the last, insensible to his deep dishonour, without compunction or remorse.

The account of "The Northern Star," "The Press," and "The Union Star," in the memoir of Arthur O'Connor, was intended to give some idea of the real as well as of the avowed object of those who conducted or contributed to those papers. Among the latter, the Sheares were not the least active; John especially, in connection with the organs of the United Irishmen both in Cork and Dublin.

The qualities of the two brothers differed widely. Henry was naturally fonder of the pleasures of society than of political excitement; he was luxurious in his tastes, showy in his dress, expensive in his habits, naturally facile in his disposition, easily irritated, and quickly appeased. He shrank at the approach of sudden or unexpected danger, and was unfitted to encounter it, though not from a deficiency in that kind of bravery which is exhibited in "affairs of honour." If it be a criterion of resolution, on any occasion of personal insult, to be ready to shoot an offender, or stand to be shot at, he wanted not courage; if mental fortitude, however, is to be distinguished from physical courage, the former cannot be attributed to Henry Sheares. But while this admission is made, it

may be said with equal truth that a more strictly honourable man in all his private relations and professional pursuits did not exist.

He was indeed ill-adapted for the strife of political life. The influence of a beloved brother, possessed of superior mental powers, whose political opinions were firmly established and boldly asserted, drew him away from the social and family circle, in which his enjoyments chiefly centred.

John Sheares, by many years his junior, was of a character that required to be known intimately, and by those private friends in whom he thoroughly confided, to enable any estimate to be formed of his merits or defects. Hitherto we have only been made acquainted with the latter.

For the information I have received with regard to him, I am principally indebted to the late Mrs. Smith, by whose maiden name—Maria Steele—she will be best known to the readers of this memoir; a lady who had been most intimately acquainted with him, on whom he had placed his affections, and by whom his name was never mentioned, to her latest hour, but with tenderness and sorrow.

The qualities of this lady, indeed, were calculated to win the esteem of all who knew her; they were of an order to be prized by one who was, of all men, most capable of appreciating a

noble nature and a cultivated mind—the late Sir Walter Scott.

The amiable and highly-gifted lady I refer to, in communicating to me a written account of her knowledge of the family, and especially of that member of it whose every secret was known to her, was pleased to leave the matter to my decision, whether her name should be given in the correspondence which she placed in my hands, and in relation to that attachment which is the subject of it.

"In publishing their lives," she says, "as it is likely mention must be made of me, at first I thought of your using the initials of my name, or of being designated Maria Steele; but, on consideration, I withdraw the scruple, and leave all to your own good judgment."

Exercising that judgment to the best of my ability, and with all the consideration that would be due to the feelings of that most estimable lady were she living, and that I owe to her memory now that she is no more, I give her name without reserve; because I feel, in all sincerity, without injury to it, that the name of Maria Steele will be associated with that of John Sheares, as that of Sarah Curran is with Robert Emmet's; and those names will be remembered with tenderness and pity when those which they subsequently received may be less remembered.

The following memorandum of Maria Steele's

recollection of both the brothers, but more particularly of John, was presented to me by that lady in 1835, in reply to some queries of mine respecting the subjects of this memoir:

Both the brothers had been United Irishmen, more than a year, when I first knew them in 1794; and they attended the meetings of that society as many others then did. A speech that was made at one of those meetings gave Lord Clare an opportunity of speaking disrespectfully of them in the House of Lords, the consequence of which was a demand for an explanation from the eldest. They had become United Irishmen at the same time, but there was nothing legally criminal in their proceedings till 1798.

In the year 1797, about Christmas, John was intensely desirous of going to America. He was indeed very anxious to leave Ireland, and would have gone wherever those he was attached to pleased, but he would not go without one particular companion. He sometimes talked of going to France in a diplomatic character, but I don't believe he ever made an effort to get appointed. He was prompt to acknowledge the danger of French assistance; and latterly America was the country he was always wishing to go to. They had been to France together, to see the three children of Henry, who were with the parents of his late wife in one of the provinces. The revolution was then going on, and it drew them to Paris. Of the other brothers, one had been drowned before my acquaintance with them, in trying to save his brother John; another brother, Christopher, was in the army, and died in the West Indies.

John used to say, with great emotion, that he had caused the death of two of his brothers, one who was drowned in saving him, the other who was reluctant to go to the West Indies till persuaded by him to go there. Their sister Julia was never married—she died not long ago. My sister thinks she remembers their married sister, Mrs. Westrop, at a ball given by Henry, but never saw her before or after; and never heard either brother speak of their married sisters. Both brothers were fondly attached to their sister Julia.

Henry's income was called twelve hundred a-year; John's fortune three thousand pounds. At the time he joined the Society of United Irishmen he was not embarrassed; his little fortune was then whole, and fully satisfied his wants. He bought nothing but books.

Henry lived beyond his income; his affairs were somewhat embarrassed, and he sold a part of his property; he also borrowed a good deal from John, who at one time wished to reside apart from his brother, but could not on that account. In 1797, Henry was for some time in a retired lodging, at No. 5, Mecklenburgh-street—the house of a Miss Halpen. He was successful at the bar till the chancellor became the enemy of the brothers. Lord Clare's enmity was chiefly against Henry; John han no quarrel with him; but on their conviction it was said he could not be spared and Henry put to death. After Henry's correspondence with the chancellor he prevented them from doing business in his court as lawyers. John then became exasperated, and spoke more severely of him than he had done before on account of his politics. He always thought him an enemy to Ireland. When I knew the brothers in 1794 they had

been at the bar some time, and lived together in Henry Sheares' house in Baggot-street.

Henry Sheares was naturally high-spirited, eloquent in discourse, and possessed of a remarkably martial and noble bearing; hut his great hauteur and want of discretion would have made him a bad leader in any public cause. In his domestic relations he was warm, tender, indulgent, willing to promote every present amusement, but wanting calculation and foresight for the future. I have always heard he was a fair scholar, and have heard good judges say that they had never seen a library so admirably selected as that of the Sheares. Henry was not considered so deeply read as John. He did not give so much time to study; but he never appeared deficient in company, either with the learned, or with those whose reading lay more amongst works of imagination and modern literature. He spoke with great fluency and elegance on literary subjects, but not without a degree of characteristic pride. His disposition was most generous; but he was not patient or forbearing. He would have made a good despot, if there can be such a thing. He spoke with much violence at times, even in society; but though haughty, and sometimes fierce, he was not of a cruel temper.

He used to talk of republicanism, but he was formed for courts. He loved power, and splendour, and luxury. The self-denying virtues he knew not. He was, however, an accomplished gentleman, fond of society, and capable of adding lustre to the most brilliant circle.

If it was possible for either brother to have acted on the proclamation attributed to John, found at the house

of Henry, it was more so for the latter than for John, who was supposed to have written it; but Henry was as incapable of deliberate cruelty as his brother.

In his person he was tall and finely proportioned, nearly six feet in height, more robust and muscular than his brother John, but not too large. His step was stately, not to say haughty, and his air much more that of a military man than a lawyer. His features were not ill-formed, but his face was not at all pleasing. His eye was proud, and the lower part of his face disfigured by what is called claret-marks, which gave rather a fierce expression to his countenance. When he conversed with women his countenance softened, and he flattered them with great eloquence; they generally liked him. I did not know him half so well as I knew his brother.

When I first became acquainted with the brothers in 1794, I heard that John was six-and-twenty, and Henry about five-and-thirty. The latter looked a great deal older than his brother.

John was considered greatly superior to his brother in talents. My intimacy with him commenced in 1794. At that time he was in the habit of attending the meetings of the United Irishmen. Of the leading men of that society Simon Butler was one for whom he appeared to have the most sincere respect. I do not think he was very intimate with any of them in private. In the evening soirées at Henry's house there were no United Irishmen very frequently but themselves. Latterly John was in the habit of seeing Surgeon Lawless a good deal. Lord Edward Fitzgerald and John were not intimately acquainted. He thought Lord Edward's talents were

only military. I doubt if either of the brothers was highly in the confidence of Lord Edward. They thought him ardent and sincere, but both spoke impatiently on the subject of his talents as a leader—and more than impatiently! John was a firm republican in his principles, but a stranger to violence of any kind till his mind was overwhelmed. His character seemed changed after Christmas, 1797; he was very desirous then to leave Ireland.

In regard to the proclamation found in his desk, I believe he was the writer of it—though that was never fully proved. At the time when it was supposed to have been written, he appeared so altered that those who used to delight in listening to him would scarce know him. His mind seemed to have lost its balance. Even his dress was not the same, his hair was neglected, &c. &c. In March, 1798, he became a member of the directory, and then first took an active part in the rebellion. I do not think he desired a revolution till at a very late period of the struggle. In becoming an United Irishman his views were—like those of all the educated and honourable persons of the society—Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. At first there were more Protestants than Roman Catholics engaged in it, and much more in the north than any other quarter of the kingdom; it was latterly that it became a religious struggle. I might say that John Sheares was naturally inclined to republicanism; but he afterwards thought that Roman Catholics were not suited for republican institutions. He used to laugh at titles, and make little of grandeur; and with respect to resistance, he thought no war justifiable but a defensive one.

His characteristic qualities were benevolence and filial and fraternal affection, a love of his fellow-creatures, and an anxiety to befriend them. As a son, as a brother, as a friend, I have never seen him surpassed. I am not aware if he used to write for the periodicals of the day; but I know that he was in the habit of composing very beautiful little pieces, both in prose and poetry; some small pieces of his I have. I do not know what became of his papers. I have got copies of the letters he wrote to his mother and sister, and the original letter that he wrote to a friend the day before his death.

His habits were those of a literary man. On the subject of Catholic emancipation, he was warm in its advocacy. In his manner he was remarkably frank. Where he gave his friendship he had no reserve, and he hated artifice. John's sentiments at the commencement of his political career were moderate; but latterly they became less so. He once drew up a plan of an independent government for Ireland; but it was done in rather a sportive kind of manner than in a serious mood; and when the mother of a young friend of his spoke with displeasure of it, he gave it to her to burn.

In his religious opinions he was sceptical as to revelation, but never spoke of it with levity. He was naturally imbued with a strong sense of the power and goodness of the Creator; if I may say so, he worshipped God sincerely and fervently, but not as a Christian. In speaking on religious subjects, to use his own words, prefixed to one of the pieces I send you—"To sport with religious subjects generally argues a want of intellect, or, what is worse, a depraved mind, that takes

pleasure in wounding the feelings of others. Maria may, perhaps, with too much reason, attribute the few following lines to the former, but never, I hope, to the latter of these defects." . . .

The brothers loved one another with extraordinary affection, and yet they were very different in their tastes and sentiments. Henry talked about republicanism; but John was an enthusiast in his attachment to it—all his habits of thinking tended that way. It suited the simplicity of his character, and the total absence of vanity that distinguished him; but he often said it would not do for Ireland. As to his personal appearance, he was tall, and rather slender than full; not what is termed muscular, but well-proportioned and active.

In his person, he differed strikingly from his brother. His air was gentle and unassuming, but animated and interesting. He was pale, rather light complexioned, with full blue eyes and an open countenance, well-formed nose, large, eloquent mouth, and white teeth; his voice was fine, his articulation very clear, his language rich, but quite unaffected; he had much playful wit and humour, but was easily made serious. You ask, was he of a sanguinary disposition? He was quite the reverse. He had a most tender heart and benevolent disposition. While he was himself, he would not give pain of mind or body to anything that lived. The brothers agreed, as I have said, in thinking Ireland ill-governed and the administration corrupt. The enclosed copies of the papers you saw are all that now remain in my possession: I should have sent the originals of these sad memorials to you had I suspected that I could still feel as I felt while copying them. I thought age and infirm-

ity had made me a better philosopher. Three of these have never been opened, except when you saw them, for more than thirty-four years. The letter had been shown to Eliza Moore, and to no one else.

The following are copies of some of the papers referred to: the first is a copy of a letter to Miss Maria Steele from John Sheares:

Wednesday, ——.

After the experience of last night's conversation, I can no longer doubt my utter inability personally to unburden to you a heart which can find no utterance for the strength and variety of its emotions. Yet, be my fate what it may, the present state of suspense is no longer to be endured. I would rather be that wretched outcast from every hope which in a few hours I may find myself, than submit to the united tortures of doubt and fear. Recall, Maria, every moment of our past acquaintance, if such moments have made any impression on your memory; retrace the involuntary appearance of my growing attachment, to which every day, every hour, has continued to add strength, until existence itself is become inseparably united with it; and though no ray of sympathy should have enlightened your conviction, and informed your heart of what was passing within mine; though no verbal declaration escaped my lips of that passion which so often fled to them for utterance, and was chased thence by a conscious want of pretension—still, Maria, your observation, however uninterested in the examination, must have convinced you of that sacred truth which has taken such full possession of my soul. You must have known I loved; but to what excess that passion had arrived—to

what a degree you had become endeared to every thought and feeling of my heart—you could not have conjectured. Nor was it known even to myself, till lately, when your existence was threatened, how incomparably more valuable it was to me than my own. When I believed you irretrievably doomed to all the horrors of perpetual decrepitude,[1] I found how contemptible the fullest enjoyment of liberty and activity was become to me while they were denied to you. I had already devoted to you a life of no value to me if you refused its service; and in the midst of my anguish for your supposed misfortune, I cherished the dear idea of becoming instrumental to the alleviation of its poignancy. Overjoyed at your recovery, I sought to requite myself for the torment I had suffered by abandoning myself to that sweet indulgence in your society which I had often before denied myself—in the hope of stifling that passion which I had every reason to believe was wholly unreturned.

The moment is now arrived in which the fate of all my future life must be decided. Others may render me unhappy, but you alone, beloved Maria, can condemn me to misery. They may oppose my efforts to obtain the only object that can ensure my happiness; but even banished from your presence for ever, and driven from all human society, if convinced of possessing your affection, I should find in that one dear reflection a home that would shelter me from despair: deprived of them, I should feel myself a houseless wretch, however courted and protected by the rest of the world. This, ever be-

[1] The allusion is to the consequences apprehended from an accident Miss Steele had met with.—R. R. M.

loved Maria, is not the language of a heated brain—it is a truth confirmed by every feeling of a heart which has loved in proportion as it has reflected.

Not on your mercy, nor on your generosity, do I throw myself, but on your heart. I neither seek to excite your pity by complaint, nor your approbation by flattery. My own pride would forbid my using such unworthy means, though I were so grossly blind as not to perceive how disgusting and contemptible they must appear to a mind like yours.

If indeed it be true, as you last night said, that you have not yet seen the man with whom you would commit your fate for life, mine is decided: but one line of conduct would then become the being who aspired to you, and that, I trust, I have sufficient courage to pursue. Never need you fear that a sigh of mine shall reach your ear, or even the slightest reproach suggest itself to my heart, for such would be the blackest injustice. I, who not only cannot find, in reviewing your conduct towards me, any source of hope, in look, word, or action, but can scarcely discover sufficient room for my escape from total despair—could I, without crime and absurdity, reproach you with the effects of my own presumption. But if—(dare I, Maria, indulge the bewitching illusion?)—if you shall have discerned in the truth, the candour, the native feelings, and doting tenderness of a heart that never has acknowledged any other power than yours, a claim superior to greater wealth, talents, and situation, and rewarded it with that affection you deny to them, what must be my blissful state! Oh! Maria, the thought—the flattering, darling thought—is too seductive. I feel myself already at your mother's

feet, imploring her consent to devote every moment of my future life to the happiness of her invaluable daughter. Your sister, too—will she not join her prayers with mine?—she has a feeling heart. But I must suppress the thought—it will only exasperate the anguish which probably awaits me. From your own lips, ever adored Maria, I will this evening learn my fate. Be that what it may, rest assured that to love you with unexampled truth must ever be the vital principle that animates the heart of

JOHN SHEARES.

CHAPTER V.

CAREER OF JOHN SHEARES

SO early as May, 1794, the attention of government was called to the movements of the Sheares, and it appears that their arrest was at that period in contemplation.

In "The Clonmel Gazette" of the 17th May, 1794, there is a paragraph stating that "it was reported information had been given against Messrs. Sheares of Baggot-street for seditious practices, and a warrant was said to have been issued, under the hand and seal of Lord Clonmel, for their apprehension."

Perhaps the above paragraph may have some bearing on a statement of a remarkable nature that occurs in a work by the late Mr. James Roche, who, in his "Essays by an Octogenarian," vol. ii. p. 112, relates the following anecdote respecting the Sheares and their old antagonist Lord Clare: "Before the outbreak of the insurrection in 1798, during the assizes of Limerick, Lord Clare desired to have an interview with the two Sheares, to which my father, in the hope of a pacific result, invited them at his house; but it ended, unfortunately, in more intense and

exasperated irritation, as was discernible in the young men's flushed features and defiant bearing as they parted. Yet the chancellor's object was certainly benevolent and conciliatory, but they were intractable. The interview was close and private: still I marked their aspect on leaving the house, inflamed and indignant in every lineament. Possibly, overtures repulsive to their feelings may have thus excited them. Happening the following year to occupy, in Dublin, apartments where the younger Sheares, John, had resided, I discovered in a recess a parcel of his correspondence, which on finding it to be to a female I instantly burned."

The octogenarian author of "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays" (printed, not published, in Cork in 1851), not only in the passage referred to, but in many other passages in his work, panegyrizes Lord Chancellor Clare. The octogenarian had a hankering after lords, and especially any with whom he had ever been fortunate enough to scrape an acquaintance. He had a great respect, moreover, for prosperous people; and hardly ever a good word or a generous thought for men who had suffered for their political opinions; and yet in private life he was a good man: he had seen the horrors of the French revolution, and had a great dread of democratic principles. The secret of his eulogies of Clare oozes out of a note in reference to old Fitzgibbon,

the father of the chancellor. The latter, he says, was a particular friend of his (James Roche's) father, and Roche's grandfather "had been the first client who paid Fitzgibbon a fee, which was the origin of a long family intercourse."

Lord Clare, moreover, had rendered services to Roche's family and friends, and through his influence was instrumental to the saving of some of the latter "from the lash and the halter."

During the short period that John Sheares had the chief direction of the affairs of the United Irishmen, more activity had been displayed by him than any of his predecessors. The plan of the insurrection, intended to have been carried into effect the 23rd of May, had been matured by him, and all the preparation made connected with it. He had been in Wexford and Kildare, and was about to proceed to Cork when arrested, with the view of forwarding the measures he had communicated to the provincial committees.

He obtained early information of Reynold's disclosures to Mr. Cope, and took immediate steps to put the Kildare committee on its guard, and, there is reason to believe, to get Reynolds himself arrested by the officer commanding in his neighbourhood. On the 16th of April, Reynolds was called on to attend a meeting of the United Irishmen at the Curragh, the object of which meeting he suspected boded no good to

him, and he declined to attend it. His son, in his biography, says his father was informed the same evening by one of the United Irishmen, a Mr. Kinsella, that John Sheares had recently been "at Dr. Esmond's house, near Naas, and having called a private meeting of some of the county delegates, had informed them officially, in the name of the directory, that Mr. Reynolds was the man who had caused the arrests on the 12th of March." [1] The consequence was that, on the 18th of March, Reynolds was removed from his office of member of the county committee, and Dr. Esmond was appointed in his place. At this time John Sheares was ostensibly in the county attending the trials that were then taking place. Mr. Reynolds says: "The gaol of Athy was then crowded with prisoners, and, amongst others, five men of the name of Pender, Farley, Brannocks, and two brothers named Germaine. These men, in consequence of orders from the provincial committee, conveyed to them, it is supposed, by Mr. John Sheares, who came down from Dublin to make arrangements for their defence, proposed to Colonel Campbell, in whose custody they were, to make some important revelation if their lives had been spared; and then they deposed upon oath that they severally held the rank of captain in a regiment of United Irishmen, of which Mr. Reynolds, of Kilkea Castle, was the

[1] Reynolds' Life, by his Son, vol. i. p. 221.

colonel; and that he was, moreover, an active leader of the United Irishmen."

If it had been possible for the energy and activity of any one man to have retrieved the affairs of the Society of the United Irishmen, after the arrest of Emmet, Macneven, and Bond, and the subsequent apprehension of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the exertions of John Sheares might have effected that object; but, with the exception of Lawless, he had no available support among those of his party who had escaped the fangs of Reynolds; on the contrary, he had the jealousy of some, the animosity of others, and the impetuosity of one individual to contend with and restrain.

Samuel Neilson, the friend of Lord Edward (whose fidelity to his party and fearlessness in its service were on this occasion more conspicuous than his discretion), had formed a plan for the release of the state prisoners then confined in Newgate and Kilmainham gaols. That Lord Edward had not been arrested at the time he formed this idea, and, consequently, that his liberation was not then contemplated by Neilson, is evident from Neilson's own account of the object he had in view, and also from the tenor of the dissuasive letter written to him by John Sheares, and found on his person, 23rd of May, when, in the act of reconnoitring the prison, he was arrested in front of Newgate by Gregg the

gaoler. The letter addressed to Neilson was in the following terms:

Sir—I have sought you in every direction, but unfortunately in vain. It is now too late to use many words upon the subject of our intended interview; let it suffice to say that I am acquainted with the destructive design you meditate, and am resolved to counteract it, whatever it may cost. Rest assured that nothing shall check a resolution which honour, private affection, and public duty unite to demand the immediate execution of; and that, however unwilling I may be at any other moment to take the only steps which your obstinacy may render necessary this evening for the preservation of my friends and of my country, I will without hesitation take them. The scheme you have undertaken I view with horror, whether its effects be considered as relating to my imprisoned friends, the destruction of whose property and lives must be the consequence even of your success; or as affecting Arthur O'Connor's existence, the precarious chance for which you thus cruelly lessen; or (what is superior to every other consideration) as ensuring the ruin of Ireland's freedom. In short, Mr. ———, to be candid with you, the scheme is so totally destitute of any apology, even from the plea of folly or passion, that I cannot avoid attributing its origin to a worse cause, and nothing can convince me of the contrary but your immediately foregoing so pernicious an enterprise. In these sentiments I am not singular, nor in the resolution which arises from them; and, should you doubt me, you must purchase your conviction at a severe cost. My resolution and that of my friends is this: if you do not, by nine o'clock this even-

ing, give us every necessary and sacred assurance that you will counteract and prevent the perpetration of this plot against all that you ought to hold dear, notice of it shall be given to the government without a moment's delay; for we do prefer that a few misguided (not to say guilty) individuals should perish, than that every remaining hope of our country's success, and the lives of our most valued friends, should be sacrificed by the accomplishment of a stupid, perhaps wicked, undertaking. Do not feed yourself with hope that any consideration shall deter me from fulfilling this threat. If every poignard you could command were at my throat I would do my duty. I did think well of you; I wish to do so still; you alone can prevent me.

J. S.

I dine at 52, Abbey-street, where I shall expect your answer before eight o'clock.

It has been erroneously stated, in a recent publication, that the letter was written at the lodgings of Counsellor Sampson, with whom Sheares was supposed to have been dining.

Sampson had been arrested at Whitehaven, the 17th of April preceding, and had been upwards of a month in gaol at the time this letter was written. John Sheares despatched it to Neilson from the house of the uncle of Mrs. Henry Sheares, Mr. Brent Neville, a sheriff's peer and merchant, living at 52, Abbey-street.

The common opinion that Neilson's original purpose was to release his friend Lord Edward, cannot be well founded: his lordship's arrest, in

all probability, had not taken place when the letter was written to him by John Sheares. The release of the state prisoners who had been previously convicted and confined in Kilmainham gaol seems to have been the first object he aimed at.

John Sheares makes special reference to the danger in which the mad attempt of Neilson would involve Arthur O'Connor, but no mention is made of Lord Edward. Besides, when the latter was arrested, on the 19th of May, he was not confined in Kilmainham; and Neilson, on his examination before the secret committee, in answer to the query, "What was the purport of that letter?" (of John Sheares), replies, "To dissuade me from attacking Kilmainham gaol." He was then asked, "Was there an intention of attacking Newgate?" (that is, on the 23rd of May), and his reply is, "I believe there was an intention of attacking it on the night of the day on which I was arrested, in order to liberate Lord Edward Fitzgerald. I believe some hundreds were assembled at the Barley Fields for that purpose." [1]

This proposed attack on Newgate was subsequent to the arrest of the Sheares on the 21st of May, and the writer of this letter, who threatens Neilson with denouncing his insane project, as he considered it to be, to the government, was then no longer able to frustrate it, but had been

[1] *Vide* Report of Examination of State Prisoners, 1798.

denounced himself, and was an inmate of Kilmainham when Neilson was taking measures for the execution of his newly devised project.

The step taken by John Sheares was indicative of the boldness and decision which belonged to his character, and of prudence, moreover, which showed that even after the arrests at Bond's and Murphy's there were some leaders left of competent abilities to conduct the affairs of the union.

In the desperate circumstances which John Sheares found the society at the period of his becoming a member of the directory, so far as the interests of that society were considered, he certainly showed no lack of ability and activity, and during the short period of his direction of its affairs its friends had no just reason to complain of his discretion, except in that act of imprudent trust in the fidelity of one so little qualified to inspire his confidence, which was fatal to himself and his unfortunate brother.

In this respect he shared only in the indiscretion of all his associates, in reposing trust where an ordinary insight into character and conduct ought to have made men reserved and cautious.

The new directory had fixed on the 23rd of May for the rising of the people. On the 10th, a Captain John Warneford Armstrong, of the King's County militia, a company of whose regi-

ment was then stationed at the camp of Lehaunstown in the vicinity of the metropolis, visited Dublin, and made an apparently casual call at the book shop of Mr. Byrne of Grafton-street, which he had long been in the habit of frequenting. Byrne's establishment was the literary head-quarters of the leaders of the United Irishmen—himself a well-known member of their society. Armstrong was accustomed to buy there the publications of the day of a republican and deistical tendency. By his own account he was in the habit of procuring such works as Paine's "Age of Reason," "Common Sense," &c.

That Byrne had good reason to think he understood the principles of his customer is evident from his introduction of this man to the Sheares —an honour unsought and unsolicited by either of the brothers.

Captain Armstrong states that he had "known Byrne, as his bookseller, for about two years; he was there almost every day." On the 10th, he states, Byrne asked him "had he any objection to meet Mr. Sheares?" To which he replied, "He had not." "He did not know Byrne's purpose." He had followed him out when he had made the proposal; "at the time it was made they had not been speaking" (on the subject of politics). But subsequently, on cross-examination, being asked, "if the proposal to become acquainted with the Sheares was merely a wish of

Mr. Byrne?" Armstrong replied, "I do not know with whom the wish originated."

It is needless perhaps to make any comment on this assertion. At the period referred to, Armstrong's secret services for this special act of perfidy had been secured.

Mr. Belsham, in his history, speaking of the detection of the conspiracy which led to the previous arrests, says:

> Government received full information from another quarter. A Captain Armstrong, a man of great address, had been instructed to profess himself a convert to the cause, to enter into the society, and to obtain, by a show of zeal and all the attentions of assiduity, the confidence of the leaders; in all which he succeeded, to a very great degree, without exciting the remotest suspicion. A new executive directory had been appointed by the provincial delegates, amongst whom were two brothers of the name of Sheares—by profession, barristers—young men of excellent talents, and, politics apart, of unsullied reputation. To these new directors the profligate Armstrong obtained an introduction; and from them he learned that a general rising must immediately take place.

This zealous officer set about his work in a business-like manner; he took "a sheet of notes after each conversation," and daily detailed the contents to his employers from memory, not from the memoranda, for these were not forthcoming till they were produced in evidence on the trial. To use his own words—"I never had an interview

with the Sheares that I had not one with Colonel L'Estrange and Captain Clibborn and my Lord Castlereagh."

Armstrong, on leaving Byrne's on the 10th of May, immediately proceeded to his brother officer, Captain Clibborn, and informed him of what had passed. The latter advised him "to give the Sheares a meeting." He then returned to Byrne's late the same day, and remained there till Henry arrived. Byrne led him to the inner part of the shop, towards a private room, and introduced him to Sheares, in these terms: "All I can say to you, Mr. Sheares, is that Captain Armstrong is a true brother, and you may depend on him."

They remained at the entrance of the private room; but Henry Sheares declined any conversation, "except in the presence of his brother." Armstrong said "he had no objection to wait until his brother came." Henry however declined to wait; and, shortly after, John Sheares arrived, and was introduced to him by Byrne.

John Sheares told Captain Armstrong "he knew his principles very well." He then solicited him "to join the cause by action, as he knew he had done by inclination;" and Armstrong replied, "he was ready to do everything in his power for it, and if he could show him how he could do anything, he would serve him to the utmost of his power." Sheares then informed

him, he states, that the rising was very near; "they could not wait for the French, but had determined on a home effort;" and the principal way he could assist them was by gaining over the soldiers, and consulting with him about taking the camp at Lehaunstown. John Sheares then made an appointment with him for the following Sunday, at his house in Baggot-street; and on that day he went and found Henry only at home. He apologized for leaving him on the former occasion, "having had to attend a committee that day." The informer states, he then asked about the camp—where it was most vulnerable? how to be most advantageously attacked? John came in and spoke about the necessity of gaining over the soldiers, and then informed Armstrong that their intention was to seize the camp, the artillery at Chapelizod, and the city of Dublin, in one night: there was to be an hour and a half between the seizing of the camp and Dublin; an hour between seizing Dublin and Chapelizod; so that the news of both might arrive at the same time.

The 13th of May, on Sunday night at eleven o'clock, by appointment, Armstrong had another interview with the brothers at their house, for the purpose of getting the names of some soldiers in his regiment who were known to the United Irishmen.

On Wednesday, the 15th, Armstrong went to

the house of his victims, but neither of them were at home; he returned to their house at 6 o'clock in the evening, and was shown into the library. He saw John Sheares, who told him "he would introduce him to a friend of his (Surgeon Lawless), with whom he might consult and advise in his absence, as he must go down and organize Cork, the news of the rising of which was to reach Dublin at the time of the outbreak there." If Henry Sheares had not declined opening his mind to Armstrong, and in fact had not done so, from the same prudential motives which caused him to quit Armstrong's presence at their first interview, notwithstanding the latter's desire to wait for the arrival of his brother, why did John find it necessary to introduce him to any other person but his brother, if the latter were inclined and qualified to consult and advise with him?

Henry Sheares was evidently disinclined to do so; he kept out of his way as much as possible, and at the interview on the 16th he did not appear at all.

The following day, Thursday, the 17th, this indefatigable officer was in pursuit of his newly-made friends. There was no escaping his assiduity; he was again at their hall-door, and again admitted; a new victim was to be gained in the person of Surgeon Lawless. Both brothers were present at this meeting. Lawless, according to

Armstrong, informed him that "he had lately attended a meeting of deputies from almost all the militia regiments in Ireland, at which meeting there were two of his men." He said he would obtain their names from a man (probably M'Cabe) who had been very active in making United Irishmen in every regiment that had been in Dublin for two years past. At this meeting Henry Sheares was implicated by Armstrong in the knowledge of the military organization.

One might have thought sufficient had been gained at that morning's meeting, and the unfortunate family might have been spared its destroyer's presence for the remnant of that day. Again, however, that evening Mr. Armstrong was at their house. He was shown into the library; Henry was not there, but John was "at home" to him; and a written introduction was obtained from him to one of the sergeants of Armstrong's regiment who was a United Irishman. Lawless at the morning interview, Armstrong says, spoke "of the trees to the right of the camp as being very convenient for hanging people," in reference to the supposed successful issue of the rising.

A few words respecting the gentleman referred to.

The observation ascribed to Lawless was one that a man only of a weak mind, of a wicked

heart, and cowardly spirit might have given utterance to. Lawless, however, was known to Moore "as a person of that mild and quiet exterior which is usually found to accompany the most determined spirit." Teeling, who had ample opportunity to be acquainted with his character, describes him as "distinguished by the highest professional talents, remarkable for the suavity of his manners, and the classical refinement of his taste." His military abilities and courage recommended him, he says, to the especial favour of Napoleon. He rose to the rank of general in the French army, and distinguished himself in several engagements. At Walcheren his intrepidity attracted the attention of both armies. When the town was taken possession of, he maintained his post for a considerable time with extraordinary courage; and when compelled to retreat he wrapped the colours of his regiment round his body, plunged into the waves and swam to an open boat, amidst a shower of bullets from the beach. At the battle of Dresden, we are informed by Macneven, he lost a leg. This gallant officer died in Paris the 25th of December, 1824, universally respected and lamented by his companions. Was this the man to harbour the dastardly, vindictive, and sanguinary sentiments attributed to him by this informer?

The late Colonel O'Neil of Paris, in a statement he gave me of the services of Irish officers

in the French service, thus speaks of General Lawless:

> General Lawless entered the French service in the grade of captain, and rose to the rank of *mareschal-de-camp*. He distinguished himself in Germany and Spain; he lost a leg in the former country, and died in Paris the 25th of December, 1824.

His widow, the sister of Mr. George Evans of Portrane (and the late Mrs. Putland), resided near Paris a few years ago.

General Lawless's name is referred to (at p. 145, vol. ii., 1st series, 1st ed. of this work) in some extracts from the evidence of Armstrong. I thought I had said sufficient to prevent any possible mistake as to my opinion of the falsehood of the imputation on his humanity. The widow of General Lawless, in her natural anxiety for his fame, fears I may not have sufficiently removed the impression intended to be created by Armstrong's statement. In compliance, therefore, with that amiable lady's wishes, I beg in the strongest terms to express my conviction that the noble qualities possessed by General Lawless rendered any action that was cruel, cowardly, or treacherous, utterly impossible of commission by him.

In the Castlereagh Memoirs and Correspondence we find a deposition made by one of the leaders of the Dublin United Irishmen, of some importance as a person in whose house in Thomas-

street Lord Edward Fitzgerald had been for some time concealed. This deposition is entitled, "Declaration of John Cormick, taken at Guernsey, 10th July, 1798." He declares herein that "during the past three months Lord Edward Fitzgerald was brought to his house by a man of the name of William Lawless in order to be concealed. . . That Lord Edward Fitzgerald remained concealed in his house for near a month; that shortly after Lord Edward quitted his house he was obliged himself to abscond, a party of the military being sent to take possession of it, upon information being received that Lord Edward Fitzgerald had been harboured there." [1]

It appears, moreover, from the evidence of other parties that during the time Lord Edward was concealed in Mr. Cormick's he was frequently visited by Lawless. Lawless was in fact one of the men most trusted by Lord Edward and by others of the leaders, and the most useful in his sphere, though taking apparently no prominent part in the affairs of the society.

Lord Cloncurry, referring to General William Lawless, says:

This gentleman, who was a distant relative of my own, was a medical man, and a professor in the College of Surgeons. He, however, fell very early under the suspicion of the government, and with great difficulty

[1] "Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh," vol. i. p. 240.

owed his escape, getting, as I have heard, on board a vessel in the disguise of a butcher's man, and carrying a side of beef upon his shoulder. He did, nevertheless, get safely to France, and having entered the army, in due time rose to the rank of major-general. The blot on his fortune was the loss of a leg in battle, but he lived many years after that occurrence, and was in good consideration with Buonaparte and his soldier *noblesse.*[1]

Lord Cloncurry cites a letter of General Lawless, dated (Paris) 11th August, 1815, in which the following passage occurs:

Your lordship does not seem to have known that I enjoy the rank of *mareschal-de-camp,* equivalent to major-general in the English service. Mr. Nolan was surprised to find me only with one leg. I thought I had communicated, long since, all these details. The English papers which I saw were very much vexed with the king for promoting me; the truth is, my commission was in Buonaparte's *portfeuille* at the period of his first dethronement. If I had not had the misfortune to lose my leg, I should have been now lieutenant-general; however, I must not complain. If ever the common saying, "Things might be worse," carried with it consolation for disappointment, it is in the present state of the world.

On Sunday, the 20th of May, Armstrong paid his last visit to the house of the Sheares; he communicated with both brothers, and partook

[1] "Personal Recollections," p. 159.

of their hospitality. Henry, he states, had given him an introductory note to one of the sergeants of his regiment, who evidently knew his officer's character better than the Sheares. He feigned to be ignorant of the purport of it, and Henry Sheares had told him, Armstrong, that the man had been kept back from motives of caution, and "he recommended him (Armstrong) to be cautious, for he and his brother had escaped by their caution; and the government then thought them to be inactive." John came in; and Henry, as usual, took the first opportunity to get away from Armstrong: he went out. John said that a man (Cormick of Thomas-street) had been at the camp with a letter to Armstrong, but had returned without seeing him. This letter was found at Cormick's house, on the 20th instant, when it was searched by Sheriff Archer, and Cormick had already absconded. The letter was in the following terms:

To Captain Armstrong.

Dear Sir—I beg leave to introduce the bearer to your confidence, on whose honour you may perfectly rely.

Yours, J. S.

Connor did not come to town as I expected, yesterday.

At the interview with the Sheares on Sunday the 20th, John Sheares told Armstrong "he had that day called at Lawless's, and that he believed

he had absconded, for he was denied to him." [1]

On the part of the executive, he informed Armstrong that "they had resolved to appoint him to the command of the King's County regiment." He further informed him that, on the night of the rising in Dublin, the lord lieutenant was to be seized, and all the privy council, separately in their own houses; that, when the privy council was seized, there would be no place to issue orders from so as to counteract the rising; and in case of a failure of an attack on the camp, on the march of the soldiery into town, through Baggot-street, they had a *sufficient number* of houses there in their interest to shoot them from, so as to render them useless. All this part of the conversation was represented to have taken place while Henry had been present. Captain Armstrong did not think it necessary to state that, at his Sunday's interview, he shared the hospitality of his victims; that he dined with them, sat in the company of their aged mother and affectionate sister, enjoyed the society of the accomplished wife of one of them, caressed his infant children; and on another occasion (referred to by Miss Steele) was entertained with music, the wife of the unfortunate man, whose children he was to leave in a few days fatherless, playing on the harp for his entertainment! These things are almost too horrible to reflect on.

[1] Lawless then resided in French-street, and at his door on the day following John Sheares was arrested.

If there be any part of the British dominions where spies and informers continue to be a part of the machinery of government—where they are kept above ground, corrupted themselves and corrupting all about them—their employers in the nineteenth century must be content to be accounted far behind the spirit of the age.

Armstrong, after dining with his victims on Sunday, returned to their house no more. This was the last time the cloven foot of treachery passed the threshold of the Sheares: on the following morning they were arrested, and committed to Kilmainham gaol. It might seem somewhat strange that Lawless and Cormick should have discovered the necessity of absconding on the Saturday previously, and not found an opportunity of putting the Sheares on their guard. Through whatever channel Lawless was apprised of his danger, the intimation, however, seems to have been instantly acted on, and immediate flight to have been effected.

This intimation was given to him on Saturday, at the College of Surgeons, where he and Dease, the most eminent surgeon of his day, were then lecturing. Dease, who was more or less implicated with Lawless in the business, no sooner was apprised of his danger than he returned to his house and put an end to his existence by cutting the femoral artery. The probability is that Lawless did not deem it prudent to return to his house

on Saturday, after he was warned of his danger, therefore he might have had no possible means of apprising the Sheares of their peril. It is plain that John Sheares, by his observation to Armstrong, believed or supposed that Lawless, who had been denied to him that day, had absconded; and it is indeed unaccountable that such a circumstance should not have alarmed him and put him in some degree upon his guard. Cormick was an unlikely man to have given himself any trouble to save his associates. It is to be borne in mind that this man was the person at whose house, when Lord Edward was concealed there, Mr. Thomas Reynolds dined, in company with his lordship, Mr. Lawless, &c.; that he was said to have been one of Lord Edward's body-guard; that he had been in no haste to deliver the letter given to him by John Sheares, addressed to Captain Armstrong; and that he had the good fortune to escape from Dublin on the 18th or 19th of May. Subsequently, however, he was apprehended at Guernsey (on the 10th of July), and his declaration is inserted in the appendix to the Report of the Secret Committee, No. 32. Therein Mr. Cormick declares "that, three months before, Lord Edward had been taken to his house by Mr. Lawless, a surgeon, since which period he had been influenced by his lordship in taking a more active part in the rebellion, by attending seditious meetings. That the

United Irishmen had a resident agent at Paris, with whom he was intimately acquainted; and he (Cormick) promised, if his pardon should be granted, to correspond with the same person, who, he was certain, would write confidentially to him."

Cormick was sent back to Dublin, imprisoned with the other state prisoners, and released at the same time. Dr. Macneven states he "met him in France, shortly after their release from Fort George, but he seemed rather inclined to shun his former associates than to renew their acquaintance." In Dr. Macneven's words, "his principles were much changed."

The anxiety of the Irish government to make Lord Edward appear as the prime mover and principal author of this rebellion is worthy of attention. In Cormick's case he is made to declare that Lord Edward had induced him to take an active part in this business. The day previously to the execution of Michael Byrne, that fearless young man was offered his pardon if he would lay the guilt of his disaffection to Lord Edward's charge. "When the proposal was made known to him, he spurned at it with abhorrence." [1]

The journal kept by Lady Sarah Napier during her husband's indisposition, at the period of Lord Edward's concealment and subsequent ap-

[1] *Vide* "Pieces of Irish History," p. 149.

prehension, throws some light on the objects of persons supposed to be friendly to the leaders of the United Irishmen, whose assiduous attention to families then bereft of their relatives, or destined soon to be so, were so remarkable. The journal of Lady Sarah Napier was written with a view of keeping her husband informed of the events which he was then unable to attend to. The following extract from it is taken from Mr. Moore's history of Lord Edward Fitzgerald:

March 24th.

Captain Armstrong came for the third time, and you saw him.[1] From him I hear that the prisoners would come off well; that there was no committee, only some of them assembled to consider what was to be done about "The Press"; that the report of the dreadful map found in Lady Edward's care was one of Dublin, with notes written by a clever gunsmith, who had marked the weak parts, and who had sent it to Lord Edward; that no sooner had this man heard of the noise he made than he went to government and said "it was his, which he had shown to Lord Edward." They asked him "for what purpose he had drawn it?" "For my own amusement," said he; so that by Armstrong's account nothing would come of all this business.[2]

With respect to the clever gunsmith, it has been already stated the person alluded to was the late Mr. Walter Cox. The recent publication

[1] The Captain Armstrong above referred to must not be confounded with the infamous John Warneford Armstrong.

[2] Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, first edition, vol. ii. p. 30.

of the Duke of Wellington's correspondence and dispatches, while chief secretary in Ireland, leaves little doubt that he was a double traitor, who played fast and loose with the leaders of the United Irishmen and the Government. It is to be noticed that Cox's machinations were subsequently to the arrests at Bond's on the 12th of March, between that period and the 24th, about six weeks before the Sheares were singled out for the operation of the informer Armstrong. On Dr. Macneven's authority, it may be stated, "the Sheares took no ostensible part in the business in Dublin till after the arrests at Bond's; there was a gap then, and they filled it up. They knew Lord Edward, but were not intimately acquainted with him. They had chiefly to do with Cork."

Captain Armstrong's information to Lady Sarah Napier, that the meeting at Bond's was not that of a committee, and that the business was only about "The Press," was erroneous. The meeting at Bond's was that of a committee, the subject of whose deliberation was of far higher importance than anything connected with "The Press." The returns of the military deputies, of men and arms in their several districts, found on the prisoners and on the table before them, showed plainly enough that there could be no expectation of the prisoners coming off well, and no opinion could be entertained of the business ending otherwise than fatally for all concerned

in it. The betrayer Reynolds, or the informer J. Warneford Armstrong, may have originated the false report. Reynolds visited Bond's family after the arrests at his house. Armstrong visited John Sheares after his arrest, and made proffers of his services.

The extraordinary effrontery and openness with which perfidy was made an agency of state, employed, salaried, sanctioned, and defended by the Irish administration in 1798, appears now marvellous. The wickedness which marked the proceedings of this agency of spies and informers has perhaps been equalled in other countries in the frenzy of civil strife, but it certainly never has been surpassed.

Other informers, however, when they have once wormed themselves into the confidence of their victims, and have possessed themselves sufficiently of their secrets to bring them to the scaffold, rest from their labours, and spare themselves the unnecessary annoyance, perhaps a feeling of remorse, at beholding the unfortunate wretches they have deceived when they are fairly in their toils and delivered over to the proper authorities. In Ireland there is no such squeamishness in the breasts of our informers. No sooner was the younger Sheares safely lodged in the Castle guardroom than he received a visit of condolence from Captain John Warneford Armstrong on the very morning of his arrest. He was asked

by the prisoner if his brother was taken, and Captain Armstrong answered, "I do not know." The unfortunate young man then asked him if *his* papers had been seized. Captain Armstrong replied, "I do not know." John Sheares then said he hoped not, for there was one paper among them that "would commit him" (John Sheares). The latter words were deserving of more attention on the trial than, unfortunately for his brother, was paid to them; for it plainly showed the paper to have been in his possession and not his brother's, and his own impression to have been that he (John Sheares) only could be injured by its discovery.

His opening his mind at all on the subject proves that when he made these inquiries he had no suspicion that he had been betrayed by Armstrong.

The same strong delusion continued to screen Reynold's treachery from the generous mind of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. He continued to receive the visits of the informer after the arrest of his associates, and his poor lady was not even exempt from the infliction of his presence. This mode of recreating his feelings, for these visits were not essential to the objects of his employers, was a customary indulgence.

The day before the arrests at Bond's, one of the persons apprehended there, and shortly after convicted on Reynolds' testimony and executed,

the unfortunate M'Cann, breakfasted by special invitation with Mr. Reynolds; and a few days subsequently to those arrests we find the politeness of Mr. Reynolds carrying him even to the house where these arrests took place to pay a visit of condolence to the wife of Bond, who in the course of a few days was likewise condemned to death on his testimony.

The capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald has been made the subject of an effective picture by Herbert; but the scene at Bond's of Reynolds condoling with his victim's wife—the fondling his infant child in his arms—could only be depicted by that Italian artist who is said to have caught the agonies of death from one he had persuaded to sit to him as a model, and then practised on his life at the moment of fixing his position, for the sake of catching the real expression of the death throes.

On Monday, the 21st of May, Captain Armstrong having completed his task the previous evening at the house of the Sheares, a warrant for their apprehension was placed in the hands of a police magistrate, Alderman Alexander, and at eight o'clock in the morning this gentleman proceeded to their house in Baggot-street, accompanied by Mr. Atkinson, one of the chief constables, and a guard of soldiers. The house in Baggot-street being then the corner one of that street and Pembroke-street, and accessible at the rear by

a private entrance in the latter street, the soldiers were first stationed at that entrance in Pembroke-street. Mr. Atkinson then rapped at the front door in Baggot-street; one of the upper windows was opened, and a female was seen looking out of the window. Alderman Alexander then came round to the front door with some soldiers, and another rap was given. He then proceeded to an adjoining house, and gained admission into the house of the Sheares by the back premises, and placed soldiers in the yard; the remainder of the force was ordered to the front entrance. Alexander entered the library, and Henry Sheares made his appearance. He was immediately apprized of the nature of Alexander's visit, and was told by that gentleman, "It was his duty to examine all his papers." Henry Sheares replied, "He might do so, for he had no papers in his study or house that could injure him in any manner or shape." This account of the arrest is taken from the evidence of Alderman Alexander on the trial. That gentleman states he had been at the door three or four minutes before he was admitted; and in that time he (Henry Sheares) might have destroyed or secreted any paper, but could not have escaped, "because he had a guard at the front and rere of the house." The arrest was made in the study, where "there were many law books." There was a small writing-box unlocked lying on the table;

it was examined by Alexander, and a paper (the proclamation, in John Sheares' handwriting) was found there by him. On its discovery the prisoner betrayed no symptom of guilt, or seemed to be in the least alarmed by its discovery.

With respect to this paper it must be observed that the friends of the Sheares state the box in which it was found had not attracted the attention of Alderman Alexander, who had been previously employed in examining papers found in other places in the study, till Henry directed his attention to the writing-box of his brother, which lay on the table, making the observation above mentioned, about his having no papers which could be injurious to him.

The house was then searched for John, but he was not found there. Henry Sheares was conveyed to the Castle, and from thence committed to Kilmainham.

The persons left in that house were the aged mother, the wife, the sister, and infant children of the ill-fated man who had just been taken from his house, never more to return to it.

The events of that morning had brought such calamity on its inmates that perhaps there was but one man living who could have contemplated their wretchedness without a feeling of commiseration.

In the forenoon of the same day Henry Sheares was arrested, Major Sirr, accompanied

by a "gentleman," went to the house of Surgeon Lawless of French-street with a warrant for the apprehension of John Sheares and Lawless. While he was employed in searching the house a person rapped at the door, and Sirr's associate opening the door, John Sheares entered, and at once found himself in the presence of Major Sirr. The major told him "he was his prisoner"; he made no resistance; "showed no symptoms of uneasiness when apprehended, or reluctance at going with him."

Sirr, after searching the room in which they were, "asked the prisoner for his papers," and the major says, "to the best of my recollection he handed them to me." He had previously sworn he had searched the prisoner, and found a particular paper on his person. While he was searching the room "his eye was not upon him; he might have torn the paper unknown to him; but he had desired the person who was with him to watch the prisoner."

The paper was a detailed account of the effective strength of the union in six districts in the vicinity of Dublin, amounting to 8,100 men.

A man in the circumstances of John Sheares, with such a paper in his possession, might well have been startled at the sight of the well-known major, on entering the house of one of his associates; but he showed no alarm; and the major's presence was certainly sufficient to inspire any-

thing but a feeling of ease or self-possession in this time of terror.

He was taken to the Castle, visited in the guard-room by the informer, Captain John Warneford Armstrong, who seemed reluctant to the last to relinquish the mask of friendship; and the visit was productive of no evidence but that which showed the prisoner's only anxiety to be for the fate of a beloved brother. In a few hours he was lodged in the same gaol with the latter.

The late Charles Coughlan of Cork, the intimate and confidential friend of John Sheares, who usually lodged in his house on the South Parade when he visited that city at the assizes, informed me he had several large boxes of papers of John Sheares' in his custody at the time of the arrest of the brothers; he had barely time to remove them when the news reached Cork of the arrests, and Coughlan's house was searched from top to bottom by the authorities, evidently for the papers known to have existed there. Had they been discovered, numbers of the first people in Cork would have been compromised. A few days after the arrests, John Sheares addressed the following letter to Coughlan:

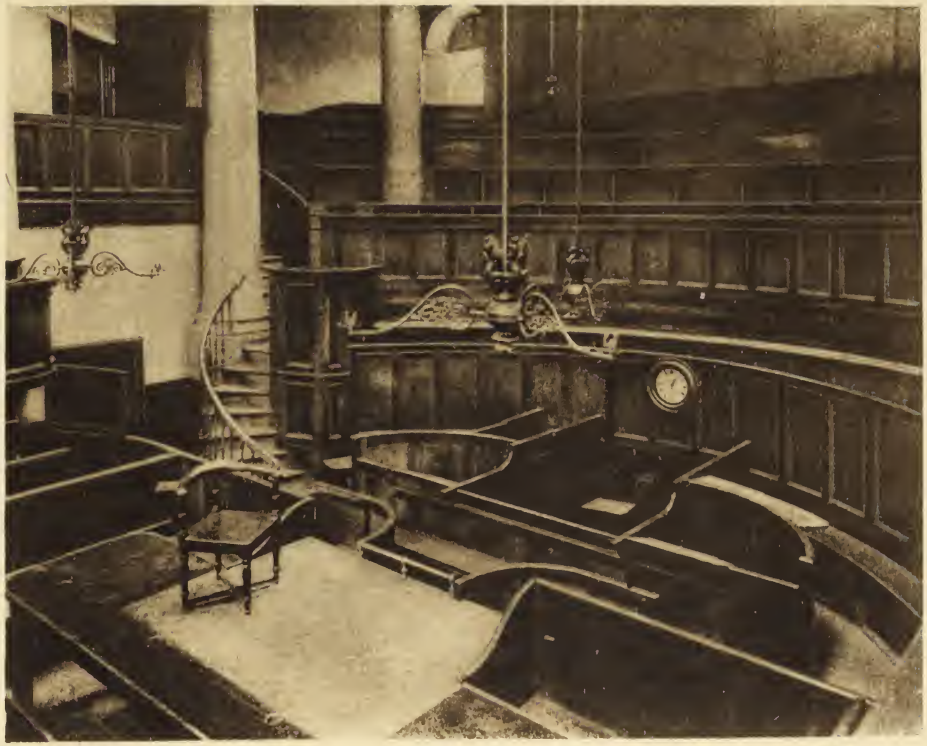
LETTER FROM JOHN SHEARES (WITHOUT DATE, WRITTEN IMMEDIATELY BEFORE HIS TRIAL), ADDRESSED TO CHARLES COUGHLAN.

Repair to the post-office the moment you take this. Enquire for a letter to Miss Margaret Spaight at Mrs.

The Room Where Robert Emmet Was Tried

The Interior of the Court House in Green Street, Dublin. After the Only Picture in Existence, now in the Possession of Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet.

"With the exception of the introduction of the gas fixtures and the clock over the dock in which Robert Emmet stood throughout the trial, no change has been made in the appearance of the room since that time."—History of the Emmet Family by Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet.



Hoare's, South Parade. Take it to her at once; if she be not home, open it, and take the letter you will find enclosed in it to Mr. Edward Hoare. His attendance here by Wednesday next is of the highest importance. My brother writes by this post to Mr. Charles Beamish. If he be in Cork take up the letter at the office, and let him have it immediately. Adieu! Heaven bless you.

(Signed) JOHN SHEARES.

CHAPTER VI

TRIAL OF THE SHEARES

ON the 4th of July, 1798, Henry and John Sheares were arraigned on an indictment found against them for high treason before Lord Carleton, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and Judges Crookshank, George, Day, and Michael Smith. The attorney-general was the Right Hon. Arthur Wolfe, the solicitor-general John Toler, and the other counsel for the crown Mr. Prime-sergeant Fitzgerald, and Messrs. Saurin, O'Grady, Mayne, Webber, and Ridgeway; the counsel for Henry Sheares, Mr. Curran and Mr. William Conyngham Plunket; the counsel for John Sheares, Messrs. Curran and M'Nally, and assistant counsel, Messrs. Orr and Finlay. An objection was taken to the finding of the bill of indictment of the grand jury, on the ground that one of the jury was an alien, born in the kingdom of France, and therefore disqualified to hold any office of trust, civil or military, in this kingdom, by the statutes 9 & 20 George III.; it was argued that the office of juryman came within the meaning of the statute, and consequently that all the

proceedings found on that indictment were informal and invalid. The counsel for the crown contended that by the 14 & 15 of Charles II., chap. 23, for the encouragement of foreigners of the Protestant religion, settling as colonists in Ireland, aliens having taken the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and being of the Protestant religion, were to be reputed as lieges, free and natural subjects of his majesty's kingdom in all respects, to all intents, construction, and purposes, as if they had been born in the kingdom of Ireland. The court overruled the objection. Affidavits were then put in on the part of the prisoners, stating that material witnesses—without the benefit of whose testimony the prisoners could not go to trial—were to be summoned from distant parts of the kingdom, and a postponement of their trials was prayed for on these grounds. The witnesses named by John Sheares were Sir Joseph Hoare, Sir Richard Kellet, Sir Patrick O'Connor, Rev. Mr. Lee, Rev. Mr. Stowell, Mr. Therry, and Edward Hoare, Esq., and the Earl of Cork and Orrery. Some of these gentlemen were the intimate friends of the father of the prisoners. The Rev. Mr. Lee was the tutor of the younger prisoner. The solicitor-general, Toler, urgently opposed the application for postponement, "as the public," he said, "were waiting the event of it with anxious expectation, and though he would not wish to accelerate it, yet

he felt the disposal of it was of the greatest importance." Lord Carleton, however, had the humanity to accede to the application, and the eagerness of the Jeffries of Ireland for the vengeance of the law was not gratified immediately. The trial was postponed till the 12th of July following. On that day the trial came on before Lord Carleton and Mr. Justice Crookshank and Smith. At the desire of John Sheares Mr. Ponsonby was assigned one of his counsel in the room of Mr. Curran, in order that both prisoners should have four counsel between them. But a very important change had taken place in the interim between the arraignment of the prisoners on the 4th of July and their trial on the 12th. The humane Arthur Wolfe, subsequently Lord Kilwarden, was elevated to the bench in order to secure the services of an attorney-general of "the right sort" (the Right Hon. John Toler), in a case where justice was to be rigorously administered and promptly executed. The personal injuries done to Fitzgibbon were now to be expiated along with the capital offences committed against the state. Toler as attorney-general realized the expectations of his patron and protector. His speech was one of the most rancorous and, so far as concerned Henry Sheares, one of the most unjustifiable speeches that ever was pronounced by a public prosecutor. Not only facts were distorted, cir-

cumstances favourable to the prisoner were suppressed, but statements were boldly made utterly at variance with the evidence he had to adduce on the part of the prosecution. I do not allude to the cruelty and injustice of suppressing a most important part of the proclamation found in the house of Henry Sheares, and attributed to the younger brother; because that document and the others found in the house of the Sheares, it is to be presumed, having been first placed in the hands of the privy council, the selections of such portions of them as were considered fit to be acted on rested with the highest legal functionary of the crown, and the act of giving that part only of the document in question that was fatal to the prisoners to be used in evidence against them, there is too much reason to believe was the act of Lord Clare. The personal interest that his lordship took in the conviction of the prisoners was not only manifested in the appointment of Toler to the office of attorney-general, but in the procuration of evidence to prove the handwriting of the prisoners. The witness for this important object was his own official servant, his secretary, Mr. Dwyer, a gentleman intimately acquainted by professional intercourse with both the Sheares, evidently reluctant to appear against them, and honest enough to bear the highest testimony to their characters as men of honour and integrity. The jury was composed of men of

high respectability, and, compared with the ordinary juries of this frightful period, was one that the prisoners might have thought an honest and impartial one. The names of the jurors were Sir Thomas Lighton, Robert Shaw, Price Blackwood, John Stewart, George Palmer, Henry Woodward, Richard Sayers, John Farrange, Cornelius Gautier, William Sparrow, Charles Bingham, and John Ferns. Some of them were intimate friends of Curran; the last-named gentleman one of his convivial associates. It was to this intimacy that Curran alluded at the commencement of his speech, when in referring to the atrocious statement of the attorney-general, that the public mind required to be appeased by the speedy disposal of this case, when he addressed these words to the jury: "Have you come abroad under the idea that public fury is clamorous for blood?—that you have been put there under a mere formality for legalizing death, and ought to gratify that fury with the blood for which it seems to thirst? If you have—— but I have known some of you, more than one, or two, or three, in some of those situations where the human heart speaks its honest sentiments. I think I ought to know you well—you ought to know me—and there are some of you who ought to listen to what even I may say, not altogether without some degree of personal confidence and respect." The attorney-general, in

stating the case for the crown, took no trouble to conceal the feelings under which he laboured, with respect to the danger which he imagined had menaced himself as one of the persons supposed to be included in the proscriptive terms of the proclamation: "I thank God," said Mr. Toler, "that I live to address this venerable bench and that upright jury. Whether it was likely I should have done so under all the circumstances, if such calumniators governed the country, you will have little room for conjecture." [1] The peculiar talent of Toler for fulsome adulation of judges and juries is well known; it sometimes degenerated into a momentary taste for complimenting the unhappy culprits on whom he was about to pass the awful sentence of the law. In this case he reversed the practice. He commenced his speech by describing the prisoners as "gentlemen of that profession to which he belonged, and to which he was bound by every tie of affection, regard, and gratitude that can bind a man of honourable feelings." A little further he designates them "as men of considerable talents and learning in the law." And in a subsequent sentence, he says, "The prisoners were not persons such as had been seen too frequently on the circuits which they had attended as barristers; men of a low rank in life, unlettered, unacquainted with the excellence of the law under

[1] Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 1.

which they lived; nor were they men whose ignorance, at the same time that it exposed them to being made the wretched instruments of seduction, rendered them rather objects of pity than punishment. No! the gentlemen of the jury would find, in the course of the trial, that the prisoners were no strangers to literary pursuits or to the exercise of talents." He then proceeded to preface his vituperation against the prisoners, with a declaration of the pain enforced on him by his duty as a public prosecutor on such an occasion. He said there was not a man who knew him in private life that did not know it weighed heavily upon him. There was not a man living acquainted with the character of the learned gentleman, who knew that a feeling of compunction in the discharge of any duty, however awful, ever weighed one jot on his mind.

"But mistaken lenity," added Mr. Toler, "to atrocious delinquents is at all times *crudelis misericordia* with respect to the public." "A banditti of men associated under the denomination of United Irishmen," he goes on to state, "imported French principles and improved on them—the pen and tongue of every revolutionary ruffian were put in requisition—those principles and doctrines which approached us like plague, pestilence, and famine, and were the dreadful presagers and forerunners of battle, murder, and

sudden death."[1] He says "it would be illiberal to overbear men in the situation of the prisoners with the language of insult"; and he then proceeds to denominate them assassins and cowards as well as traitors. In alluding to the paper written by John Sheares, he said, "who can read the bloody scroll and not pronounce upon the intentions and imagination of the heart which composed it? And whilst he thus beheld it, he thought he had in full and palpable form before him the sanguinary author penning it, with his bloody dagger in one hand, and pointing in triumph to the revolutionary tribunal and guillotine with the other. I admire the wisdom of the laws of those countries which put *traitors and cowards* in the same class as public criminals; and I am free to say that the man who is a traitor or coward enough not to take that unequivocal part which becomes him at such a time as this, deserves the severest punishment and the execration of his country." With this observation, and a remark that there was not a single line of the paper in question the effect of which was not

> "But to teach
> Bloody instruction, which, being taught, returns
> To plague the inventor"—

with these words he committed the case of the prisoners to God and their country, without being able so far to preserve the common decency of

[1] Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 51.

his office as crown prosecutor as to conclude his laborious effort to establish the guilt of the prisoners with the ordinary form of recommendation to the jury, of giving the accused the benefit of any doubt that might be favourable to them in the evidence adduced against them. The gross and wilful perversion of truth on the part of a prosecutor in a case where the issue involves the question of life and death would now, at least in England, be visited with the universal execration of the members of the legal profession of all parties. This wicked perversion of truth and justice occurred on the trial of the Sheares, on the part of the public prosecutor, in his statement of that part of the case which related to the possession of the document, the authorship of which was clearly proved to be that of John Sheares. This paper, though unpublished, was made one of the principal overt acts laid in the indictment against both the brothers. It was found in the house inhabited by both the prisoners; it was proved to be in the handwriting of John Sheares; it was found in his writing-box; he was not present when the attention of the police magistrate was directed to it; and Henry Sheares declared he was at liberty to examine every paper, for there was not one that could in any shape or manner injure him. The fact was that Henry Sheares was utterly ignorant of the existence of that paper.

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John Sheares informed his friend and relative Mr. Flemming, after his conviction, that on the night preceding his arrest, after Henry and his family had gone to bed, he sat up till a late hour writing, and amongst other papers had written that one which was called the "Proclamation," and that his brother Henry had no knowledge whatever of it.

One of the first questions that John Sheares put to Armstrong at the Castle guard-room, a few hours after his arrest, was to know if his papers "had been seized, for there was one which would commit him." The police magistrate who made the search and seizure at the prisoner's house being asked on the trial if any attempt had been made by Henry Sheares to secrete any paper, replied, "None whatever." He was asked if, during the time he was endeavouring to gain admittance into the house, "Mr. Henry Sheares might have secreted or destroyed any paper in that time?" The answer was, "He might." And to the further question, "If Henry Sheares, when that paper was found, betrayed any symptoms of guilt, as if alarmed by it?" the answer was, "He did not." Henry Sheares, previous to the judge delivering his charge, requested permission to say a few words respecting that paper, "which appeared to him not to have been sufficiently dwelt upon." He said, "I protest most solemnly, my lord, I knew nothing of

it; to know it, and leave it where it was when the magistrate came, is a folly so glaring that I cannot be supposed to have been guilty of it." Lord Carleton, in his charge, said that it did not appear in evidence whose property that writing-box was (in which the paper was found open and unlocked), or to which of the prisoners the house belonged. John Sheares, interrupting his lordship, said, "I beg your lordship's pardon, it was in my writing-box that paper was found." [1] I have stated, and am aware, re-stated some parts of the evidence on this point, in order to show the facts, in the face of which the attorney-general declared, not once, but repeatedly, and with all the apparent positiveness of unquestionable proof, that the proclamation in the handwriting of John Sheares was "found on and in the possession of Henry Sheares." In his opening speech he said, "Gentlemen, two kinds of evidence will be laid before you—parole and written. The latter will be of very considerable weight; and being in the handwriting of one of the prisoners, and found in the chamber and possession of the other, it will go to a participation with them both." In another part of his speech he says, "I come now, gentlemen, to a piece of written evidence, to which I am to call your particular attention; and you will see by this document, to which I have alluded, as being in the

[1] Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 63.

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handwriting of one of the prisoners, and found on the other." He further states, that when Alderman Alexander searched the house, and perceived the writing-box in which the proclamation was found, "he asked to whom it belonged? Mr. Henry Sheares acknowledged it to be his." Will it be believed that Alderman Alexander denied this assertion on his oath? When he was examined by the crown prosecutor on this point, and was asked, "Did you speak to him (Henry Sheares) about the desk or the paper?" his reply was, "I had no conversation with him about the desk or the paper." He says that "Mr. Alexander did not proceed there (to the house of the Sheares) with ruffianly violence or a display of the instruments of death;" and yet the evidence of the police magistrate directly contradicts this statement—one file of soldiers was posted in the front of the house, another in the rear; and when Mr. Alexander entered the house through an adjoining one, and got into the back premises, a file of soldiers was posted as a guard on the steps of the hall-door. I am informed by Mrs. Smith (the former friend of John Sheares, Maria Steele), and likewise by her sister, that from one of the back windows of their house, in Merrion-square, on the south side, there being then a vacant space nearly opposite to Pembroke-street, in Baggot-street, they perceived the steps of the hall-door of the Sheares' house thronged with

soldiers, and saw Henry Sheares led down the steps as they were taking him to the Castle.

The commotion which was naturally occasioned by the military surrounding the house soon spread over the neighbourhood, and the cause of their appearance there could be a matter of little doubt to those who were acquainted with the unfortunate persons of whom they were in search.

What the feelings of one of the ladies I have referred to must have been, at the sight of the guard, it is not difficult to conceive.

The conduct of the attorney-general, Toler, as a crown prosecutor, in making statements against a prisoner, not only which he had no evidence to substantiate, but which were in direct opposition to the testimony of the witnesses for the crown, it is devoutly to be hoped—and from the humanizing influence of religion and civilization on men of all parties, it is fully to be expected—will never be found worthy of imitation. There can be no doubt that, were it not for the pains taken to fix on Henry Sheares a guilty knowledge of this paper, his life would have been preserved.

There was nothing in the evidence of Armstrong against him to prove that he had taken any active part in the plans of the United Irishmen; certainly, no part, on so extended a scale, or for so long a period, as in the case of the other state prisoners, and especially the members of

the former directory, who were already in treaty with the government for their pardon, and that of their associates, on the condition of making a full confession of their acts; and these acts, by their own acknowledgment, went to the length of forwarding their views by the intervention of assistance from France; while the efforts of the new directory were confined to what they called a home exertion; and French invasion formed no part of their project. In fact, there could have been no reason given for the capital punishment of either of the Sheares, while mercy was to be extended to Bond, Neilson, O'Connor, Emmet, and Macneven, and the other prisoners; and with respect to one of the Sheares, it is evident there was not a shadow of proof of any knowledge (on his part) of the existence of that culpable paper, except that it was found in a house which was inhabited by him, as well as the brother who was the author of it. It certainly was a very unfortunate determination for Henry Sheares that a separate trial was not resolved on by his counsel. The attorney-general, at the opening of the proceedings, stated his intention to go on with the trial of the younger brother, and thereupon a precept was directed to the sheriff to return his panel for that case first. But the counsel, on conferring with the prisoners, stated it was their wish to join in their challenges, and both the prisoners were then put on their trial. The same

unchanged and unchangeable affection which so intimately bound one brother to another, was injudiciously allowed in this instance, it seems to me, to operate fatally against one of them.

It is impossible to reconcile the rigour with which they were pursued with the mercy that was extended towards those who were the prime movers in the rebellion, who were known to have long been at the head of its affairs, to have been in active communication with a foreign government, and to have made various applications for foreign aid, when these persons, already looking on the affairs of their society as irretrievably ruined, had entered into negotiations with the government previously to the trial of the Sheares, and indeed when there was not the slightest prospect of success; it is difficult to understand the necessity of putting the law into its fullest force against the subordinate agents and, in point of time, the comparatively powerless leaders of its forlorn hope; and it is impossible to account for the extreme severity with which their offences were visited, except on the grounds of the implacable animosity which the impression of the unwise and reprehensible menaces in the letter addressed to the "Author of Coercion," and former causes of irritation, had left on the mind of their bitter enemy, Lord Clare.

In the case of the Sheares, the evidence of the witness Captain Armstrong was that on which

the acts set forth in the indictment were sustained. In the interim between the apprehension of the prisoners and their trial, the valuable life of this gentleman was placed in imminent peril. His anxiety for active service did not permit him to remain in inactivity; he was not allowed to join his own regiment, which was then employed at some distance from the capital. But notwithstanding the prohibition was from Lord Castlereagh, Captain Armstrong was so ambitious of sharing in the military glory of his companions in arms in the neighbouring counties of Wicklow, Kildare, and Wexford, that he volunteered his services and obtained command of the grenadier company of the Londonderry militia. At the unfortunate battle of the Slievebuy mountain, where Colonel Walpole was killed and his party discomfited, one of the few who escaped with life was Captain Armstrong. It is generally admitted that the ignorance, temerity, and inability exhibited in the command and employment of this force occasioned its discomfiture. Armstrong was wounded in the engagement on the 4th of June, a fortnight after his last interview with the Sheares, and six weeks previously to their trial. His wound, however, did not abate his zeal. On the trial, his own cousin, Mr. Thomas Drought, deposed that Armstrong, in speaking of the engagement and the numbers killed, said to him, "they had caught

two or three (peasants) at a distance; that one was hanged for refusing to give information, another I believe was suspended, and Captain Armstrong said he cut him down; but one was hanged outright, and we both agreed it was not a good way to make him confess. That on his suggestion the fellow that was suspended, or had the rope round his neck, I am not sure which, was ordered twenty-five lashes, and when he received eight, he cried out with vociferation that he would give information; that he then led them on, and said the person who was hanged could have given the same information though he suffered himself to be hanged. I asked how he could possibly reconcile it to himself to deprive those wretches of life without even the form of a trial. He acknowledged they did so. I asked him whether he expected any punishment for it, and although he might not expect it from government, yet that there was an all-powerful Being who would punish him; he said you know my opinion long ago upon the subject." [1] The witness further deposed that he had known Armstrong from his infancy. He had frequently heard him utter "atheistical expressions"; he spoke of the state of the soul after death "as an eternal sleep," and told witness "he had left the Somersetshire militia on account of his democratic principles." Armstrong's own version of his exploit on the

[1] Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 129.

unfortunate countrymen is given in the coolest terms of self-approval in his cross-examination by Mr. Curran. He said, with respect to the three countrymen they had taken, "One was to be hanged, another was to be flogged. We were going up Blackmore-hill, under Sir James Duff; there was a party of rebels there; we met three men with green cockades; one we shot, another we hanged, and the third we flogged and made a guide of." [1]

Mr. Curran asked the witness, "Which did you make the guide of?" Captain Armstrong jocularly replied, "The one that was neither shot or hanged."

Lieutenant Shervington, of the 41st regiment, deposed that "he was nephew by marriage of Captain Armstrong, and had known him since his childhood. When in Lord Cork's regiment in England, had conversations with him. Did not think his principles exactly such as a military man's should be. Had a conversation with him at his agent's, Mr. Mulholland; talked of various things—the French revolution—and he said he did not wish for kingly government. He said that if there was not another executioner in the kingdom for George III. but himself, he would be one, and pique himself upon being so. I told him he was a d——d fellow, and ought to give up his commission, and leave the army and go

[1] Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 80.

over to France." He had met him at Byrne's the bookseller in Grafton-street; he handed him a book, saying, "Read this, it is my creed"; he (the witness) found it was Paine's "Rights of Man"; he thrust it into the fire, and said he (Captain Armstrong) should be served so. The witness further deposed that he did not know the Messrs. Sheares, and never had seen them until that day. That he would not have come forward to give evidence on this trial, but had been summoned, "and would not have appeared for 100 guineas." That on meeting with Captain Clibborn he had said "he was sorry to hear that John Armstrong was finding out the secrets of men in order to discover them; and being told it was a different thing, that the Sheares wanted to seduce the soldiers, he had said 'D——n him, he should have run them through the body.' Mr. Bride, a barrister, deposed to his having been acquainted with Armstrong; recollected having been, within the last six or eight months, in company with him at the chambers of Mr. Brown, in college, and heard him (Armstrong) express an opinion "slighting the obligation of an oath." Mr. Graydon, a barrister, deposed that he had known Armstrong; had frequently heard him express republican opinions "in a very violent and unqualified manner." "He uniformly expressed opinions of that kind." Such were the sentiments on religious and political subjects im-

puted to this witness by his most intimate friends and relatives, by his uncle by marriage, and his cousin.

Let us banish for the present the horrors connected with the creed, the acts, and abominable villanies of Captain John Warneford Armstrong. I leave them unnoticed here with a feeling that it is a relief to get rid, even for a few moments, of the consideration of this man's character and conduct. Now, let us turn to the testimony of the witnesses with respect to the character of the prisoners. This evidence is not confined to that given in their favour by their own witnesses; it is given by those even brought forward on the part of the crown prosecutor. The chancellor's secretary, Mr. John Dwyer, who proved the handwriting of the prisoners, deposed "that he had a great deal of professional intercourse with the elder brother, and some with the younger brother. He had never met men in dealing who appeared to him to have more integrity. They were considered by him to be men of honour and integrity. . . . He had always considered them as honourable men."

"Mr. Boardman, a barrister, deposed that he had known the brothers for seven or eight years. So far as he could collect their political principles from any conversation he had had with them, he thought them anxious to bring about a parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation.

They went no farther, as well as he could recollect. Three months before he had met Mr. John Sheares in company, and he had expressed sentiments of similar import." Mr. John Sheares, interrupting the witness, said, "I wish to remind Mr. Boardman whether I did not regret that reform had not taken place as the best mode to prevent revolution, which would take place if not prevented by reform." Mr. Boardman replied, "I do not recollect that Mr. Sheares made use of expressions to that effect." Mr. Edward Hoare deposed that "he had known Henry and John Sheares a great many years, and their father before them. Their political opinions went very much as to men and measures." Mr. C. St. Leger, a barrister, "had known the brothers since he was six years old; John Sheares had been his schoolfellow. During the whole of their acquaintance his opinion as to their general character was, that it was the very best that he could conceive any men to possess."

The evidence of Mr. Thomas Casey, a barrister, deserves particular attention, and the sentiments expressed in the latter part of it the highest praise. He deposed that "he had been long acquainted with both brothers, and most particularly with John. Their general moral character was as good and as high as that of any men he had ever known. With regard to Mr. John Sheares, he had lived with him a long time,

and during that time he never had an occasion to do otherwise than admire, esteem, and respect him—and that was for a period of eighteen months, during which they lived together." He was asked if he considered the Sheares were men who were likely to encourage murder and bloodshed. He replied, "With regard to Mr. Henry Sheares, I do not conceive it possible; with regard to Mr. John Sheares, if it be possible, I do conceive there must have been as great a revolution in his mind as any that ever took place upon the face of the earth. And I do recollect, about two years ago, or upwards, that I did hear John Sheares, in as warm a manner as I ever heard him speak truth to me upon any occasion, say that he would be the first to take arms against a foreign enemy, and the last to lay them down." Being asked by the counsel for the crown if "he did not confine what he had said to their moral character," the witness replied, "I mean it to the full extent of what I have said. I speak of their moral character, and to their political also, as far forth as my words can reach. At the assizes of Cork we had some conversation; John Sheares and myself talked about the politics of the day, upon which we differed. He spoke with confidence to me, as two men intimately acquainted might do in conversation: and the opinions he expressed were against a revolution and a foreign enemy." The counsel for the crown

asked the witness if the conversation would not have terminated had Mr. Sheares intimated a contrary opinion. The following noble reply was made by Counsellor Casey: "I do not know that it would, for I should have endeavoured to persuade him to be of my opinion, which is full and entirely contrarient. I would not give him up while I had a hope of him, nor till I had a solid reason for the contrary (opinion)." Honour to the man who had the manliness, the humanity, the nobility of mind to speak these words! These were times when every man who dared to come forward in defence of the unfortunate persons accused of treason was sure to be taunted by the crown prosecutors with a participation in the views and objects of the accused, and every effort was resorted to by the subordinate agents of government to deter men from coming forward to give evidence in favour of those who were obnoxious to the dominant faction of that day. The effort to browbeat this honest man was contemptuously repelled, and his last declaration of what he considered a man's duty to his friend when he had fallen into error, deserves to be remembered with feelings of gratitude, respect, and honour.

The reader will not fail to bear in mind the opinion expressed in cases of the duty that friendship claims, when he recalls Sir Jonah Barrington's sentiments on this subject, as shown in his

conduct on the occasion of his meeting with the Sheares, in the company of Bagenal B. Harvey, at Wexford.

It was past midnight when the examination of the witnesses closed. The trial had already occupied fifteen hours, when Mr. Curran, like every one around him, judge, jury, and advocates, exhausted with fatigue, applied to the court at the close of the case for "a few hours' interval of repose, or rather for recollection."

The attorney-general, the sanguinary Toler, opposed the delay, and the trial proceeded at that unseasonable hour.

Mr. Curran being informed that much had already been conceded to him, the insult was felt, and his indignation was never couched in eloquence more impressive than on this occasion.

It seems that "much has been conceded" to us. God help us! I do not know what has been "conceded" to me, if one of so little importance may have extorted the remark. Perhaps it is a "concession" that I am permitted to rise in such a state of mind and body—of collapse and deprivation of energy—as to feel but a small spark of indignation raised by the remark that "much has been conceded" to the counsel for the prisoners—"much has been conceded" to the prisoners! Almighty and merciful God, who lookest down upon us, what times are these to which we are reserved! when we are told that "much has been conceded" to men who are put upon their trial at a moment like this—of more darkness and night of the human intellect than a dark-

ness of the natural period of twenty-four hours; that public convenience cannot afford the brief respite of a few hours to those who are accused of offences touching their lives, and that "much has been conceded" to the advocate whose strength is already exhausted in the mere observation he has endeavoured to make upon it! My countrymen, I do pray you, by the awful duty which you owe your country—by that sacred one you owe your characters (and I know you feel it), I do attest you by the Almighty God to have mercy upon my client—to save him, not from guilt, but from the baseness of his accusers, and the pressure of the treatment under which I am sinking! With what spirit did you leave your homes this day? In what state of mind and heart did you come here from your families? With what sentiment did you leave your children to perform an act of great public moment—to pledge yourselves at the throne of eternal justice, by the awful and solemn obligations of an oath, to do perfect, cool, impartial, and steady justice between the accuser and the accused.[1]

No less solemn, earnest, and truly eloquent was the exordium of this most able and impressive address. Praying that the spirit of British law and British liberty might extend their influence to the tribunals of this unhappy country, he said, "Will you say their example has no weight with you, though stamped with the authority of a great and exalted nation—the only European nation where liberty hath taken up her abode? Do not imagine that the man who

[1] Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 144.

praises liberty is singing an idle song! For a moment it may be the song of a bird in his cage; I know it may be so—but not for ever. You are now standing upon an awful isthmus—a little neck of land where Liberty has found a seat. Look about you. Look at the state of the country—the tribunals that a dire necessity has introduced. Look at this dawn of law still admitting the functions of a jury. I feel a comfort in the reflection of its existence. Methinks I see the venerable forms of Holt and Hale looking down upon us, attesting its continuance. Is it your opinion that bloody verdicts are still requisite to society—that gore enough has not been shed—that the bonds of society are not to be drawn close again, nor the scattered fragments of our strength bound together to make them of force, but they are to be left in that scattered state in which every stripling may break them to pieces?"

Previously to the judge delivering his charge to the jury, Mr. Henry Sheares addressed the following words to the court:

My lords, after the able and eloquent defence which has been made for me by my counsel, it would ill become me to add anything to it. But there is one part of it which appears to me not to have been sufficiently dwelt upon. It is respecting that paper. I protest most solemnly, my lords, I know nothing of it. To know of it, and to leave it where it was when the

magistrate came into the room, is a folly so glaring, that I cannot be supposed to have been guilty of it. When the alderman rapped at the door, I asked what was the matter? After he had been admitted, he said he wanted my papers. I told him they were there. My lords, is it possible I could commit myself and all I hold dear by so egregious an act of folly? Having the dearest sources of happiness around me, should I sacrifice them and myself by leaving such a document in an open writing-box? My lords, I thank you for this indulgence. It would be irregular for me to expatiate on this subject any further. The evidence of Captain Armstrong is one of the most ingenious and malicious fabrications, with respect to me, I ever heard of. My lord, I think I could not be legally implicated by any paper found in this way.

Lord Carleton (the early and intimate friend of the father of the prisoners) then proceeded to charge the jury. After laying down the law of treason, and adverting to the question raised by the counsel of the prisoners, as to the sufficiency of the evidence of one witness in cases of treason to convict the accused, he said: "It has been argued, that in treason two witnesses are necessary here; that they were necessary by the common law of England, and that the common law being the same in both countries, two witnesses are necessary here. That the common law is the same in both countries, I admit; but as to the point of two witnesses being necessary in treason in this kingdom, with the concurrence

of the bench and the opinion of several judges of this country, given in some of the late cases here, I avow that two witnesses are not necessary. They are necessary in England by a statute which does not prevail to the same extent here. It is very true that Lord Coke was of a different opinion as to the common law of England; however, Lord Hale and Mr. Justice Forster say it was the received opinion that Lord Coke was wrong."

His lordship then proceeded to comment on the evidence of Alderman Alexander with respect to the proclamation found in the house of the prisoners. He said: "It was found in a writing-box which lay upon a table, open and unlocked, and that it did not appear evident whose property that writing-box was, or to which of the prisoners the house belonged."

Here Mr. John Sheares interposed, saying: "I beg your lordship's pardon, it was in my writing-box that paper was found."

His lordship observed:

I cannot call upon the prisoners for any admission of this kind, and I wish the paper may be determined by the evidence alone. It does not appear by express evidence which of the prisoners was to be deemed as having it in his possession; as against John, who had written it, it is of more weight than against Henry; but as against the latter, it is of weight as being the act of one of the conspirators in possession of the nature and

objects of the conspiracy; nevertheless, as to him, leaving the discussion open as to the extent of his guilt. Gentlemen, this paper wants one circumstance of additional strength, in not being published; but, notwithstanding, it is very powerfully operative in the cause, as corroborative of the other evidence, and as marking the intention of the party whom it is to affect.

With respect to the evidence of Armstrong, he said: "His testimony is sought to be impeached by showing that he does not believe in a Supreme Being, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. He has sworn that he does believe in a Supreme Being, and in a future state of rewards and punishments; though it has been sworn he declared the contrary." His lordship left it to the jury, "whether he had made those declarations which had been imputed to him seriously, and communicating his real opinions (for he had been described as giddy and inconsiderate in his expression) or not"; observing that "the evidence of Captain Clibborn supported and fortified his testimony," [1] and that on several parts of his testimony "the papers established his credit in a very strong manner."

His lordship concluded by observing that "if the jury were satisfied with regard to the first count, that the facts had been established against

[1] This gentleman was a captain in the same regiment that Armstrong belonged to. The sense of Captain Clibborn's services on this occasion we may estimate from the manner they were rewarded: "December 3, 1800.—George Clibborn, per receipt, £500."

both prisoners, they would find them both guilty; if against one only, they would find him guilty; and if they entertained any rational doubt, not merely a capricious doubt, but the doubt that might be entertained by sensible men, then in a capital case like this they would lean to mercy."

With regard to the second count, "of adhering to the king's enemies, the act must be done with the imputed intent of aiding the king's foreign enemies."

The jury were to determine whether the communication made to Armstrong by John Sheares, of the pressure of events preventing their waiting any longer for French assistance, implied the purpose of opening rebellion by the seizure of the camp, city, and privy council, expecting at a later period the assistance of the French, and that the rising was acted on with a view to aid the foreign enemy; that intent was absolutely necessary, and the jury must be satisfied of this intent.

The jury then retired for seventeen minutes, and brought in a verdict, finding both the prisoners GUILTY.

As soon as the verdict was pronounced, the prisoners clasped each other in their arms.

It was now nearly eight o'clock on Friday morning, when the court adjourned to three o'clock.

The court met at the appointed hour, and the

attorney-general moved that Henry and John Shears might be brought up for the judgment of the court. They were accordingly brought into court, previously an ineffectual objection having been taken to the indictment by Mr. M'Nally, on the ground that the indictment did not specify where the venue of the adherence to the king's enemies was laid. This objection having been overruled, the prisoners were placed at the bar, and being asked "what they had to say why judgment of death and execution should not be awarded against them, according to law," Mr. Henry Sheares addressed the court in the following words:

My lords, as I had no notion of dying such a death as I am about to meet, I have only to ask your lordships for sufficient time to prepare myself and family for it. I have a wife and six children, and hope your humanity will allow some reasonable time to settle my affairs and make provision for them.

He was unable to proceed further. The allusion to his family paralyzed his utterance. He was overwhelmed with tears.

Mr. John Sheares then addressed the court:

My lords, I wish to offer a few words before the sentence is pronounced, because there is a weight pressing upon my heart, much greater than that of the sentence which is to come from the court. There has been, my lords, a weight pressing upon my mind, from the first moment I heard the indictment read upon which I was

tried; but that weight has been more peculiarly and heavily pressing upon my heart, when I found the accusation in the indictment enforced and supported upon the trial; and that weight would be left insupportable, if it were not for this opportunity of discharging it: I should feel it to be insupportable since a verdict of my country has stamped that evidence as well-founded. Do not think, my lords, that I am about to make a declamation against the verdict of the jury, or the persons concerned in the trial, I am only about to call to your recollection a part of the charge which my soul shudders at, and if I had not this opportunity of renouncing it before your lordships and this auditory, no courage would be sufficient to support me. The accusation, my lords, to which I allude is one of the blackest kind, and peculiarly painful, because it appears to have been founded on my own act and deed, and to be given under my own hand. The accusation of which I speak, while I linger here yet a minute, is "that of holding out to the people of Ireland a direction to give no quarter to the troops fighting for its defence." My lords, let me say this, and if there be any acquaintances in this crowded court—I will not say my intimate friends, but acquaintances—who do not know what I say is truth, I should be reputed the wretch which I am not—I say, if any acquaintance of mine can believe that *I* could utter a recommendation of giving no quarters to a yielding and unoffending foe, it is not the death that I am about to suffer which I deserve—no punishment could be adequate to such a crime. My lords, I can not only acquit my soul of such an intention, but I declare in the presence of that God before

whom I must shortly appear, that the favourite doctrine of my heart was, that no human being should suffer death but where absolute necessity required it.

My lords, I feel a consolation in making this declaration which nothing else could afford me, because it is not only a justification of myself, but where I am sealing my life with that breath which cannot be suspected of falsehood, what I say may make some impression upon the minds of men not holding the same doctrine. I declare to God, I know no crime but assassination which can eclipse or equal that of which I am accused. I discern no shade of guilt between that and taking away the life of a foe, by putting a bayonet to his breast when he is yielding and surrendering. I do request the bench to believe that of me—I do request my country to believe that of me—I am sure God will think that of me.

Now, my lords, I have no favour to ask of the court: my country has decided that I am guilty, and the law says that I shall suffer: it sees that I am ready to suffer.

But, my lords, I have a favour to request of the court that does not relate to myself. My lords, I have a brother, whom I have ever loved dearer than myself, but it is not from any affection for him alone that I am induced to make the request. He is a man, and therefore I would hope prepared to die if he stood as I do—though I do not stand unconnected; but he stands more dearly connected. In short, my lords, to spare your feelings and my own, I do not pray that I should not die—but that the husband, the father, the brother, and the son, all comprised in one person, holding these relations dearer in life to him than any other man I

know—for such a man I do not pray a pardon, for that is not in the power of the court, but I pray a respite for such time as the court in its humanity and discretion shall think proper. You have heard, my lords, that his private affairs require arrangement. I have farther room for asking it: if immediately both of us be taken off, an aged and revered mother, a dear sister, and the most affectionate wife that ever lived, and six children, will be left without protection or provision of any kind. When I address myself to your lordships, it is with the knowledge you will have of all the sons of our aged mother being gone. Two have perished in the service of the king; one very recently. I only request that, disposing of me with what swiftness either the public mind or justice requires, a respite may be given to my brother, and that the family may acquire strength to bear it all. That is all I wish—I shall remember it to my last breath, and I will offer up my prayers for you to that Being who has endued us all with the sensibility to feel. That is all I ask. I have nothing more to say.

Lord Carleton.—In the awful duty imposed on me, no man can be more sensibly affected than I am, because I knew the very valuable and respectable father and mother from whom you are both descended; I knew and revered their virtues. One of them, happily for himself, is now no more; the other, for whom I have the highest personal respect, probably, by the events of this day, may be hastened into futurity. It does not rest with me, after the conviction which has taken place, to hold out mercy—that is for another place; and I am afraid, in the present situation of public affairs, it will be difficult to grant even that indulgence which you,

John Sheares, so pathetically request for your brother. With respect to one object of your soliciting time for your brother, unfortunately it could be of no use, because by the attainder he will forfeit all his property, real and personal—nothing to be settled will remain.

It cannot be too much lamented that two gentlemen, well educated, of good birth, respectable descent, and considerable talents, should be involved in a conspiracy that might have spread desolation over the kingdom and brought us all to ruin. This country has enjoyed as much freedom and security in the possession of everything that was dear and valuable, as was consistent with a stable and effectual government, where a part of our natural liberty is taken away in order to secure the rest; his majesty has been celebrated for his mild and gracious reign, as a strict observer and protector of our laws, our rights, and our religion. His reign has been a continued series of liberal concessions to the people of this country, calling upon them to make a suitable return of fidelity, attachment, and allegiance. The conspiracy in which you have been involved proposed, as one of the means of effecting its object, to invite a foreign enemy into this kingdom, and to subject this country to foreign yoke. The conspiracy has been remarkable for the system, perseverance, and art with which it has been conducted, and for the wide diffusion of its principles. Other revolutions have had for their object a change of monarch, or an alteration of the constitution, but this conspiracy proposed the destruction of the higher orders of the state, and an almost general massacre. Those who formed this system, so artfully carried on, endeavoured to make

the people of the country bad men, and thereby to make them more likely to become bad subjects. The conspiracy of which you have been convicted, had for its object the destruction of the monarchy and of the constitution, and to substitute anarchy, the worst of all tyrannies, in their place; and as far as we can collect from the intelligence received upon the subject, to annihilate all religion and morality, without having any substitute save the unrestrained licentiousness of profligacy and vice; and this was done when a foreign enemy had threatened to invade this country, had denounced its destruction, and had avowed an intention to erase its name from the list of nations.

When you meditated the destruction of our laws, religion, and constitution, it is surprising you were not checked and restrained in the attempt by the danger attending yourselves, or by adverting to the extensive mischiefs which must have necessarily ensued.

Let me, with great earnestness and charity, request you to reflect upon the enormity of your guilt, and that you will call to your minds that effusion of human blood which has already taken place, and that incalculable mischief which may follow a deliberate system of massacre and devastation. I could wish that the manifesto read in evidence against you had contained nothing sanguinary; but recollect, that in that manifesto it was declared that no person should be spared who did not join the rebellion prior to the attack.

Mr. John Sheares.—I beg pardon, my lord, that was the evidence of Captain Armstrong—it is not part of the paper.

Lord Carleton.—I have not the paper here, but that

evidence was given against you. It now falls to my lot, and I never felt more pain than I do upon the present occasion, to pronounce that sentence which the law has provided against persons committing crimes of such magnitude as aim at the destruction of society. It is a sentence of great horror, but such as the wisdom of our ancestors ordained as a guard round the person of the king, and as a fence about that noble constitution which was acquired by our ancestors, and which, I trust, we will transmit unimpaired to posterity, in order to hold out terror to those who are disposed to do ill, and to afford protection to the loyal part of the people of this country.

His lordship then pronounced sentence.

Mr. Attorney-General.—My lord, I could with great sincerity allow any indulgence of time, if the country could by possibility admit of it. But, my lords, I have a great duty to discharge, and must pray that execution may be done upon the prisoners to-morrow.

Court.—Be it so.

The issue of this trial no Englishman who reads this brief statement of its proceedings can fail to be astounded at. The conviction of one of the prisoners, taking into account the difference of the law and of the estimate of the value of human life in both countries, might have been anticipated in Ireland; but the conviction of the elder brother even there could hardly have been expected. For this result Henry Sheares was totally unprepared; and it will be seen by one

of the letters of his brother John, that although he well knew what his own doom was likely to be, he had not the slightest idea that his brother would be convicted.

In the annals of judicial rigour, I doubt if there is any parallel, except in those of Ireland, to the conduct of the attorney-general, Toler, in this instance—first, in compelling the counsel for the prisoners to proceed with their defence at midnight, after a sitting of the court of fifteen hours, and having called for the judgment of the court a few hours after the conviction, then praying the court that execution might be done on the prisoners on the day following.

It is impossible to form any other opinion of the indecorous and inhuman anxiety manifested for the immediate execution of the prisoners, hurrying these unfortunate gentlemen from the dock to the gibbet, from the tribunal of the court into the presence of their God, without affording them sufficient time to collect their distracted thoughts, to prepare their minds for the approach of their awful change, to arrange their temporal affairs, to bid a last farewell to their wretched friends, than that which those friends entertained—that Lord Clare was not willing there should be sufficient time for the success of any application to Lord Cornwallis in their behalf. The character of that nobleman afforded to the implacable enemy of the Sheares too much

cause for apprehension that the clemency of his nature might triumph over the severity of justice, and that his breast was not impenetrable to the supplication of the unfortunate.

Toler's heart, indeed, mailed as it was in "complete steel," mercy-proof, and shielded against an appeal like this, was not actuated by any feeling of vindictiveness in the performance of the task expected at his hands. He went through it for the sake of the run after the rebels as he would have gone after the hounds, with all the keenness of a sportsman—whether in the field or on the bench—only anxious to be in at the death. Lord Clare, in some things, was a man of somewhat similar taste, but of a very different temperament. He hunted down his game, not for the pleasure of the chase, but on account of his antipathy to the creature he pursued. His natural disposition was by no means sanguinary; his feelings were warm, impetuous, ungovernable; he was capable of forming ardent friendships and of doing generous actions. But his violent temper, his imperious, haughty, vindictive feelings, his arrogant disposition, his loose principles, and unbounded ambition, made his love of power and command a domineering passion which brooked no opposition, and converted his sense of offended pride into implacable resentment. With respect to the leaders of the United Irishmen who had given him no personal offence,

he not only refrained from obstructing their overtures to enter into terms with the government, but his exertions were successfully used in their behalf when other members of the privy council were clamorous for their prosecution. The recollection of his conduct on these occasions was probably not forgotten by Macneven when he spoke to me of his lordship with all his grievous faults as "an Irishman after all." Mr. Moore has recorded a trait of his character, in reference to Lord Edward Fitzgerald, which shows his nature to have been intended for better things than his political course would lead one to expect of him. A few days previously to the arrests at Bond's, he said to Mr. Ogilvie, "For God's sake get that young man out of the way; the ports shall be open to him." On another occasion of no less peril to an individual implicated in an attempt to procure the assistance of a military force from the French government, he gave that individual timely information of his danger, and thus enabled him to effect his escape. This circumstance never has been made public, but I see no reason why it should be withheld, or that an act of justice to the memory of one whose conduct on other occasions has been deservedly reprobated should be left undone. The late Archibald Hamilton Rowan owed his life to a communication made to him by Lord Clare. The statement of the fact may cause the justice

of the opinions expressed on the subject of his lordship's conduct in the case of the Sheares to be called in question; but the inconsistencies of Lord Clare's character it would be a difficult matter to reconcile or to account for. It is, however, far more gratifying to the writer to have one trait of generosity to record of such a man than to corroborate other statements of a very different description by new evidence of his vindictiveness.

My authority for the above-mentioned fact is a physician, long and intimately acquainted with Rowan, a gentleman of unquestionable veracity. He was informed by Rowan, a short time before his death, that the first intimation he received of the detection of Dr. Jackson's correspondence with the French directory, and of the discovery by government of a paper, in his own handwriting, composed by Theobald Wolfe Tone, and copied by him (Rowan), setting forth the political state of Ireland, had been communicated to him while he was confined in Newgate (undergoing the sentence imposed on him for publishing and distributing "a seditious libel") by a person sent to him expressly by Lord Clare for the purpose of acquainting him with his dangerous position.

Rowan, promptly acting on the information, easily found means of escaping from jail, and fled to France.

Would that any similar act of generosity in the case of the Sheares could be recorded of his lordship! Unfortunately, in their case, there is no exhibition of generosity, but too evident proofs of the remembrance of old animosities, and resentment for personal offences rankling in his mind, and never lost sight of till they were expiated under the forms of legal vengeance.[1]

Before quitting the subject of this trial, it is necessary to allude to the difference in regard to evidence between the law of treason in England and in Ireland: two witnesses are required in England, and one only at that period was requisite in Ireland to convict of treason. In Dr. William Jackson's case, 1794, this discrepancy in the law of the two countries was first made subject of legal controversy; the court, however, decided that the evidence of one witness was sufficient, and the prisoner was accordingly convicted! This decision was made, not in virtue of any existing statute, but on the grounds that the British statute, 7 Wm. III., was not in force in Ireland, and that the common law, which rendered the evidence of one witness sufficient in cases of felony, was likewise applicable to cases

[1] Lord Castlereagh deemed it necessary to the character of the Irish government to have *an improved* report of the trial of the Sheares printed and published in England. In the secret service money payments published in the first volume of this edition will be found the following item:—"Feb. 2.—Mr. John Stockdale of London, for printing Sheares' Trial, 1798, by direction of Lord Castlereagh, £46 11s. 1½d.

of treason, and sufficient to convict on. The Act of Union, however, of 1800, did not make the law of England applicable to this country, or place the law with respect to treason on a different footing to that on which it previously rested! In the cases of Jackson and the Sheares, the indictment was under 25 Ed. III., cap. 2, and no clause in that act relating to evidence had fallen into disuse or been annulled in either country. The statute, however, of 7 Wm. III., which expressly declared the evidence of two witnesses necessary in cases of treason, was declared not to be in force in Ireland. Another statute, I believe repealed, of Philip and Mary, third and fourth of their reign, had been in force in Ireland, whereby it was enacted that "all trials for high treason are to be hereafter according to the common law alone," and "two at least of the parties who depose anything against him (the accused) shall, if living and in the kingdom, be produced before him!" The opinion of Lord Chief Justice Clonmel, in Jackson's case, of the sufficiency of one witness to convict, is diametrically opposed to the decisions of the great legal authorities of England! In Dr. Jackson's case, the chief justice said, in his charge in reference to the question of the "sufficiency of one witness," the common law of England and Ireland is the same. One witness is enough, if you be-

lieve that witness; if he swears to the facts laid; if they are sufficiently stated to have been his acts, and go to manifest the intention imputed to him. It is the opinion of this court that a second witness, by the common law of Great Britain and of this kingdom, is not necessary. And the statute of William III. which requires two witnesses is not in force here. That such was the common law appears to have been the opinion of Sir Richard Forster, as high an authority as any other. He states (page 223) "that one witness is sufficient if he has spoken to all material points."—(*Vide* Ridgeway's Reports. Jackson, p. 38.) The other judges in this case, Downs and Chamberlain, said they agreed with the chief justice that one witness was sufficient. Mr. Ponsonby, the counsel for the prisoners, acknowledged that Judge Forster and Sergeant Hawkins had held this opinion, but that Coke, a higher authority than either, had laid it down that "no man can be convicted of high treason but upon the evidence of two credible witnesses at least to every overt act and to every kind of treason." In the case of the Sheares, Mr. Ponsonby, one of the counsel for the prisoners, in his speech in defence, appears to have given up the point he contended for on the former trial: he now admitted that the law was not the same here as it is in England—the law (unhappily

for the subjects here) being, that one witness alone is sufficient to convict.[1]

Mr. Curran, the other counsel in this case, made a similar admission; he said, "I do not pretend, gentlemen, to say you are bound by an English act of parliament; you may condemn upon the testimony of a single witness." But he told the jury, "It would be doing that which in Ireland might be legally done, and in England it would be murder to do." He cited Blackstone's authority for the necessity of a double testimony to convict, in order to secure the subject from being sacrificed to fictitious conspiracies, which have been the engines of profligate and crafty politicians in all ages.[2] It was henceforward held by our Irish judges that the decisions of Clonmel and Carleton had in that country superseded the authority of Coke and Blackstone! Taking the above decisions into account, it appears that as the statute 7 Henry III. did not bind Ireland by its legislative cogency, and entitle this country to the benefit of England's protective laws, and the Act of Union of 1800 left Ireland subject to the operation of its own barbarous enactments, or conflicting interpretations of those acts prior to the statute of William III., the Act of 1800 had taken away the legislative power of conforming

1 Ridgeway's Report of the Trial of the Sheares, p. 104.
2 *Vide* Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. iv. p. 358.

its judicial proceedings to the humanized spirit and character of the times! It is said both countries are governed by the same laws, and these laws are administered with equal justice; how did it happen, then, that in one country men could be convicted of treason on the evidence of one witness, and not in the other; and that human life was estimated at double the value in England which it was in Ireland—in short, worthy in the former of twice the amount of protection which it was in the latter? Did this arise from the necessary consequences of colonial rule, naturally springing from the domineering sense of imperial power? Or was it to be regarded as a conclusive proof of a less obvious fitness for the higher privileges of British law, based on a well-founded opinion of the mental and moral inferiority of the people of the dependent country? To whatever cause the deprivation of so valuable a privilege in one country, and its existence in another under the same rule is to be attributed, certain it is that the British subject who, in cases of this kind, happened to be placed upon his trial in England, had protection in a twofold proportion for his life and liberty from the possible baseness of falsehood or malignity, to that which was granted to the subject of the same sovereign who happened to be tried in the sister kingdom.

On the trial of the elder Watson for high

treason in 1817, Judge Bayley in his charge to the grand jury said, "In cases of treason, it is necessary that there should be two witnesses in order that the accused may be convicted—two witnesses to each overt act. But if one witness proves one overt act, and a second proves another in the same count, that will be sufficient in law to warrant conviction." Such an extraordinary difference in the laws, or the interpretation of them, in two countries governed by the same sovereign, and owing to him the same allegiance, to intelligent Englishmen will appear hardly credible. In wading through the painful records of the crimes and tyranny of those times, no subject connected with them was the source of more astonishment to myself. The importance of the matter induced me to enter on an inquiry that required no little research, and of a kind for which my pursuits were indeed little qualified. The result of those inquiries, as detailed in the foregoing pages, I communicated to a gentleman of the legal profession, whose claims on the respect of his countrymen are more than hereditary, and entitled on higher grounds to their regard and confidence. I requested this gentleman to inform me how the law at present stood in regard to evidence in cases of treason, and what alteration, if any, had been made. To that application I received the following reply: "An act was introduced in the imperial parliament by

the late Lord Holland (1 & 2 George IV.), by which the provisions of the English statute 7 Wm. III. chap. 3, requiring two witnesses in cases of high treason, have been extended to Ireland; and in this respect the law of the two countries is now the same."